

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: June 24, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Health and Human Services

Subject: A report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), requesting approval of \$1,538,636 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to fund the early childhood and family engagement project

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requests approval of \$1,538,636 in Milwaukee County of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to engage community partners in providing additional resources, services and supports to children and their families in Milwaukee County.

BACKGROUND

This proposal would provide ARPA funds to help children thrive and give their families techniques to help enhance their child's development and learning potential. This is especially important for families who have been underserved and under-resourced. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, child and family-focused pandemic recovery supports are essential to address potential risks to child development due to social and economic stressors, including:

- Social restrictions, distancing, and childcare shutdowns
- Loss of support networks
- Increased stress level of parents and caregivers as a result of illness caused by COVID-19, the difficulty of combining working from home with full-time childcare, and economic insecurity
- Increased exposure to pre-existing vulnerabilities within families such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the expansion of existing resources which promote healthy development and prevent toxic stress are imperative to the overall health of children and their families. Families of children with disabilities as well as those who have been impacted by disparities in COVID19, are at increased risk of the forementioned challenges. Furthermore, COVID-19 has brought dramatic and detrimental changes to the lives of children and families and has severely increased the barriers to high quality

early childhood experiences for many, undoubtedly widening the racial achievement and economic gap. This project aims to implement the following:

- Improved healthcare access, social emotional development and mental health supports through partnerships
- Intergenerational programs in partnership with Aging and Disabilities Services
- Parental and caregiver support
- Coaching for early childhood professionals and service coordinators to ensure they can identify and connect children to Milwaukee County services available through the Children's System of Care
- Evidence-based early literacy in everyday spaces
- Support for DHHS Staff and Contracted Providers to complete Infant Mental Health Capstone through UW-Madison Key Partners

The initiative convenes Milwaukee County DHHS Birth to Three Program, the City of Milwaukee Office of Early Childhood Initiatives, Hear WI and the United Community Center. The Birth to 3 Program is a federally-mandated Early Intervention Program (Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – IDEA) designed to support families of children with developmental delays or disabilities under the age of three. It is a longstanding program that funds and implements evidence-based programming across the US. The problems facing children and families are extensive and require collaborative effort of families, community members, elected officials, organizations and system partners to facilitate solutions in a coordinated manner. In addition to the key partners listed above, local mission-aligned community-based organizations, including but not limited to the following, will have an opportunity to apply for funding to participate in the initiative through a participatory budgeting process that involves families. Five awards per year, up to \$100,000 each, will be made to organizations that provide early childhood and family support health and educational services.

Existing partnerships with the following entities will also be leveraged to carry out initiative objectives in alignment with the guiding principles:

- Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)
- Milwaukee County School Districts
- Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) & Partnering agencies
- Children's Wisconsin
- Office of Early Childhood Initiatives
- City of Milwaukee Health Department
- Community Health Centers (CHCs)

The DHHS will track the following data and outcomes of this project:

- Number of community-based organizations collaborating with Milwaukee County as a result of ARPA Early Childhood funding
 - Dollars allocated to community organizations and
 - Number of caregivers and community members who are engaged in the

participatory budget process to allocate funds

- Number of public spaces like waiting rooms, bus stops, laundromats, grocery stores equipped with hands-on activities to encourage positive interaction and learning between caregiver and parent through Mighty Moments
- Completion of a Neighborhood, Public Education and Social-Media campaign that promotes messaging on early brain and child development
- Number of families and children that HEAR Wisconsin provides linkage and follow-up enhanced case management services to ensure connection with needed Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services programs and resources
- Number of Milwaukee County staff and contracted providers who are able to complete the Infant Mental Health Capstone program
- Hire a bilingual Social Emotional Behavior Coach by Q4 2022
- Plan and hold 10 parent workshops a year, per site resulting in a total of 40 workshops. (Surveys will be administered.)
- 95% of parents who receive direct coaching from the SEL Coach will report an improvement in their ability to effectively manage and support their child(ren) during their quarterly parent meeting or home visit.
- 100% of Teachers will report they agree or strongly agree that they learned new approaches to supporting the children in their classroom using SEL or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

All of the partners who are participating in the initiative are serving children and families who have experienced disparities in education and health. Parent advisory committee (i.e., OEIC) and Parent Community Cafes (i.e., Milwaukee County) allow for consistent engagement of families and caregivers. The goal is to ensure projects and resources are acceptable, accessible and meet their needs in a way that is relevant and promotes equity.

Hearing and Language Development: Children who have hearing loss are at high risk for significant delays in understanding and using language which is the cornerstone of learning. Important neural pathways are developed throughout the early years of life. It is essential the brain be provided with acoustic information, via optimally fit technology, and language rich environments during this time in life when the brain is most receptive to learning. If early intervention services are not provided in a timely manner, as soon as possible after birth, the child's communication centers in the brain may not develop adequately and the child will not be on par with their hearing peers, resulting in significant difficulties with communication and language as they begin school. Primary focus for this project is identification and contact with families of color who have children with confirmed hearing loss. The goal is to enroll families of children with hearing loss into hearing-loss-specific early intervention services.

Disparities in education and social emotional learning of Hispanic Children: Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanic children faced huge health disparities that put them

not only at greater risk of illness and disease but make it harder to thrive and succeed in school and beyond. Research has found that Latino children are at higher risk for behavioral and developmental disorders, school dropout, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and more. Latino infants have the same language and cognitive abilities as their white peers, but by the time they reach age two, they lag significantly behind. Researchers have found that poverty and lower participation in center-based childcare are two reasons for this disparity. Providing support for parents and additional professional development for early childhood education staff will provide equitable access and opportunity, helping them to overcome the racial and health inequities of coming from a marginalized community. Through the Building Resilience Project, these children will be more likely to improve their development, self-regulation skills, and school readiness, resulting in improved academic achievement, graduation, and ultimately, in improved earning power, countering the structural bias rooted in access to programs like this.

Participatory Budgeting: This method of allocating resources for community-centered work builds the capacity of community-based organizations while providing a platform for community members to share power and decision-making with government entities. Families who will benefit from the services, resources and programs will take part in selecting the organizations that will facilitate the projects.

Milwaukee County DHHS will serve as the manager for the initiative. Contracts and specific codes will be set up to ensure funds are allocated appropriately. Each partner also has complex accounting systems (i.e., UCC utilizes Financial Edge finance system) which ensures that expenses align to accounts and contract standards as dictated.

This proposal received approval from the Community Support Subcommittee and was approved by the ARPA Task Force at its meeting on June 9, 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approve \$1,538,636 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to implement the early childhood and family engagement project.

FISCAL EFFECT

This resolution would allocate \$1,538,636 from the American Rescue Plan Act funds to the specific programs above. See attached fiscal note.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Health and Human Services
Clare O'Brien, Budget & Policy Director, DHHS
Kelly Pethke, Interim Administrator CYFS

PREPARED BY:

Kelly Pethke, Interim Administrator, Children, Youth and Family Services, DHHS

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Health and Human Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution
Fiscal Note

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Liz Sumner, Chair, Finance Committee
Sup. Shawn Rolland, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Pam Matthews, Fiscal & Management Analyst, DAS
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office