

**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 \$2,950,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for justice involved girls and other special populations project

File Type: Action Report

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**REQUEST**

The Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requests approval of \$2,950,000 in Milwaukee County of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to develop, implement and engage community partners to provide services specifically for girls and other special populations of justice involved youth.

**BACKGROUND**

This proposal would provide ARPA funds for the DHHS to work with community partners to build the system of care for justice involved girls, as well as other special populations of youth. Youth included in the special populations could include youth who are in multiple systems of care (children disability programs, child welfare, youth justice, behavioral health, etc.) and youth who identify as LGBTQIA.

While service limitations for girls were identified years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified barriers to effective services for girls as providers across the continuum of services struggle to retain staff, connect with clients, and adapt service provision models to meet girls' needs. Many programs were forced to temporarily shut down during the pandemic, particularly those serving youth in secure placements and there is a need to restart and build on the foundation of previously existing program. Research has also shown that the pandemic has significantly increased need as it worsened mental health problems, particularly for teenagers who struggled with disconnection from school and peers and are reporting elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

The proposed project is specifically designed to target girls (including transgender youth who identify as girls) involved in or at risk of involvement with the youth justice system, a disproportionate number of whom are marginalized, African American girls, and expand

resources and opportunities for this historically underserved population. Through the project, CYFS will invest in proven and promising strategies to expand the menu of gender- and culturally responsive services available to girls in the community and secure placements and reduce barriers to access to promote racial and health equity. Funds will be strategically targeted at intervention and prevention services in marginalized and under-resourced communities to address the root causes of poor health outcomes, including justice system involvement, and prevent engagement with the court system entirely.

The daily rate as of July 1, 2022 for a girl to be sent to the Division of Juvenile Corrections is \$1,178, which is over \$429,000 per year for every youth sent to Corrections. The proposed project will address this urgent need, expanding services for girls to meet their needs in Milwaukee. This project will also counteract social isolation and other harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly African American girls who are disproportionately at risk, adjudicated, and placed out of home in the Milwaukee County youth justice system. Funds will support comprehensive, gender responsive services for girls including prevention and intervention services through new and growing partnerships with grassroots community-based organizations best positioned to serve these girls and address the root causes of behavioral problems; programming for girls in secure care; and expanded community-based alternatives to incarceration to prevent harmful placements. These services include the following for justice involved girls:

- Gender responsive mentoring and advocacy
- Individual and groups to address the impact of trauma
- Response to impact of sex trafficking, to include prevention and interventions
- Poetry and healing
- Gender responsive anger management interventions
- Exposure and engagement in sports and other recreational activities
- Restorative justice activities
- Leadership growth opportunities
- Skills groups to develop social, emotional and practical skills
- Education tutoring and support
- Mental health and counseling services
- Vocational and employment opportunities
- Violence interruption and engagement
- Out of home treatment options, used only when necessary to meet the needs of the girls

The CYFS currently has 16 beds for girls in the detention center with a current population of 20 girls and does not have any ongoing contracts for community-based beds for girls. This project will help support the capacity building of community-based placements for girls in Milwaukee to reduce the population of girls in detention waiting for placement. This project will also support the Year of the Youth Initiative with a specific target on girls. This initiative will connect young people to jobs, encourage their creative passions,

provide mentoring and job shadowing opportunities, feature youth days at sporting events, and publicly highlight the best in our youth across Milwaukee.

The project has four objectives:

- Expand the network of contracted service providers offering programming for girls to increase access to gender and culturally responsive services both in secure care and the community;
- Reduce disparities in access to critical health services that meet the unique needs of girls of color, particularly African American girls;
- Engage and collaborate with community stakeholders to co-create tailored solutions for girls; and
- Improve public safety by promoting equity and addressing root causes of systemic health disparities.

If this project is not funded, girls are more likely to stay in detention longer, be court ordered to the Department of Corrections-Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) and be placed in an out of state facility. This impacts the average daily population and increases the average length of stay for youth in the youth detention center. The 2022 daily rate for a youth in the youth detention center is \$417, with an annualized cost of \$152, 205 per youth. Girls are also placed outside of the state of Wisconsin when there are no other options to meet their needs locally. CYFS has no jurisdiction of the programming or length of stay, nor any oversight of any of the out of state facilities that girls are placed within, and the youth are then removed from their homes, communities and their state, negatively impacting them even further. The daily rate of the out of state facilities do vary, although CYFS has paid up to \$650 per day for a youth sent to an out of state facility, with an annualized cost of \$237,250.

This proposal allows for CYFS to work with community-based providers to work with girls and other special populations within secure detention and in the community to ensure their needs are met locally in the Milwaukee area. The proposed project was informed by community input and will build capacity of community-based organizations specializing in providing services specifically for girls. In 2022, CYFS has collected input directly from community members on strategies to reduce youth incarceration through four community forums and two youth forums – both of which were held in the detention center and one of which was held with girls only. The project is also informed by the recommendations of the Girls Workgroup, a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders including representatives from CYFS, Wraparound Milwaukee, the Department of Children and Families, Office of Public Defenders, Children's Court, Urban Underground, Youth Justice Milwaukee, My Sista's Keeper, Saint A., Wauwatosa School District, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Foundations for Freedom, Inc., and Children Service Society of Wisconsin. It also builds on ongoing community engagement efforts to connect with grassroots organizations including agencies run by women of color and launched specifically to provide services for justice involved girls and those at risk of becoming justice involved.

Grants to these organizations will provide funds to build their capacity to meet the needs of girls in their communities and provide additional resources for girls and their families. This project will target residential and other out of home placements providers for girls to support their work in recruiting, training and retaining staff that want to work with justice involved girls in Milwaukee County. The project will increase the resources to respond to girls in unsafe situations and address their basic needs, such as clothing, food, transportation and temporary housing. There is a need to continue to advocate in the community in order to remove the stigmatization girls often face in seeking help and to address their unique and individual needs, to include mental health and substance use treatment.

CYFS is requesting \$2,950,000 to support the proposed project. The majority of funds - \$2,250,000 – are allocated to contracted and fee-for-service agreements with service providers to expand community-based and secure-care programming tailored specifically for girls and other special populations (to include, but not limited to transgender youth who identify as girls). Community-based services would include prevention and intervention programming for at-risk girls, community placement alternatives to incarceration, and programming for justice-involved girls on community supervisions or aftercare. Programs for youth in corrections and secure care would be tailored to the needs of girls in detention, the transition program currently being developed, and out-of-home placements including foster care, group homes, healing homes, and residential treatment centers. Funds could also support girls-specific planning for the future state SRCCCY. The funds would also support technical assistance and training to support implementation of programming across the continuum of care.

The proposed project was also designed to leverage potential matching funds. Though not guaranteed, there is a potential for the Public Welfare Foundation to match up to \$200,000 to fund a participatory budget process focused on resourcing services for girls. Therefore, the proposed project includes \$400,000 (\$200,000 per year in 2023 and 2024) to support a participatory budgeting process with the Milwaukee Turners focused specifically on services for at-risk and justice-involved girls.

The budget also includes \$50,000 to support staff attendance at conferences or site visits to learn about effective strategies to expand gender-responsive services; \$160,000 to support project management and technology supports for community-based Interventions, and \$90,000 to fund youth and family supports to strengthen community engagement and community stabilization initiatives.

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 \$2,950,000 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to build the continuum of care for girls and other special populations in the youth justice system.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

This resolution would allocate \$2,950,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act funds to the specific programs above. See attached fiscal note.

### **TERMS**

N/A

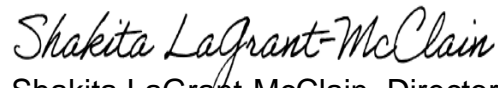
### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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, 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