

October 3, 2022

DSP Informational Memo Series 2022-24i

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator  
DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Home Providers  
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Wendy Henderson  
Division Administrator



Re: **Grant for the Expansion of Community-Based Services to Support Children with High Acuity Needs in Out-of-Home Care**

#### **PURPOSE**

This memo informs agencies that license foster homes of a grant opportunity for community-based services to support children with high acuity needs in out-of-home care. Youth may be placed in out-of-home care under CHIPS, JIPS, or delinquency order. The overall goal is to increase and support the number of caregivers statewide that can successfully support placement of youth ages 10 and older with high acuity needs, thereby reducing the number of youths placed in congregate care settings like residential care centers (RCC) and group homes (GH). These services shall meet the needs of youth who have limited placement resources in the community due to their high acuity needs, which may be co-occurring, including mental and behavioral health diagnoses; intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities; and trauma responses that are often presented as unpredictable or aggressive. The department has identified that many youths with high acuity needs in WI identify as LGBTQIA2S+, have experienced a disrupted adoption, and are disproportionately youth of color.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The governor's office allocated an estimated \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to be used between January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2024, to expand community-based services for youth in out-of-home care with high acuity needs.

Wisconsin's child welfare system has limited placement resources for youth with high acuity needs, often resulting in children being placed in highly restrictive congregate care settings. Youth with high acuity needs are often eligible for enrollment in community-based services under Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) or Children's Comprehensive Services (CCS), however these services can only be provided to youth in a home setting, and at times are insufficient to stabilize a child in the community.

A 2022 Casey Family Program [report](#) states youth who experience group and institutional

placements have higher re-entry rates after exiting to reunification than youth in other types of out-of-home care settings, are less likely to achieve permanency than those raised in non-relative foster families, and frequently experience these placement settings as punitive, and traumatic. Therefore, it is imperative that youth with high acuity needs are living in a community setting and can access services quickly to prevent deeper system involvement.

### **INFORMATION SUMMARY**

Funding is intended to augment the existing services and funding structure that an agency already has in place to increase the number of caregivers statewide that accept placement of youth with high acuity of needs. Services should aim to provide community-based clinical and therapeutic services to enhance caregiver capacity, maintain placement stability, leverage co-parenting practices, support the youth's transition to permanency and provide post-permanency stabilization to avoid re-entry. Services should also be focused on responding to the specific needs of the youth to ensure they remain in their communities and do not enter congregate care. The objective of this grant is to demonstrate efficacy of additional services and supports with an orientation toward future sustainability of these approaches.

Funding will be outside of, and in addition to any current rates charged for foster care. Funding will be allocated to agencies that license foster homes and provide services directly targeting the following outcomes:

- Increase the number of community placement options specifically targeting youth ages 10 and older with high acuity needs
- Increase placement stability in community settings
- Prevent placement in congregate care settings
- Prevent re-entry in out-of-home care

Allowable expenses under this grant include but are not limited to:

- Costs to provide caregivers training that is trauma informed and culturally responsible.
- Costs to provide clinical and therapeutic supports that are not readily available through other funding sources.
- Costs associated with therapeutic tools such as: adaptive toys, sensory devices, etc. that help regulate the youth's needs at home that are not covered expenses through other programs.
- Family find and engagement tools, transitional services, and discharge planning that supports reunification or placement with family or like-kin.
- Support co-parenting models.
- Post-reunification services for youth and their families to sustain continuity of care that supports reunification, family connections and stability in the family home.
- Costs to recruit and train caregivers for youth with a high acuity of needs.
- Recruitment and hiring of additional professionals to implement the grant activities.
- Administrative and IT costs associated with implementing the grant activities.
- Rental/lease costs for additional community space for clinical and therapeutic services when home-based cannot be provided.
- Other allowable expenses that align with the intent of this funding.

#### *Application Process:*

Grant funding will be awarded via a competitive grant process. Agencies may submit one application with one or more proposals with different total funding requests. The Department

will award contracts based on the responses received, while considering the geographical range of youth and families served and plans that target overrepresented populations in the Child Welfare System as part of the review process. Award amounts will be dependent on available funding, with an estimated amount of 3 million dollars.

Interested agencies may apply independently, develop a consortium identifying a lead agency, or utilize a subcontractor for services. Agencies shall apply for the grant on form DCF-F-5403-E 2107 - Grant Application Form and complete 2107 - Attachment A: Expansion of Community-Based Services to Support Children with High Acuity Needs in Out-of-Home Care. All applications must be completed and submitted to the Out-of-Home Care Program and Policy Analyst via [DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov) **no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 25, 2022**. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Agencies that are awarded this grant must agree to the following:

- Complete quarterly progress reports on the implementation of their activities, including the number of youths served and plans to address any identified barriers.
- Complete an exit summary report that describes the number of youths served, their placement stability and permanency outcomes, and the average length of time a youth receives this programming pre- and post-permanency.
- Document expenses in SPARC within sixty days of each expenditure.
- Expense the funding they receive by December 31, 2024.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Program & Policy Analyst-Adv.  
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care  
[DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov)

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

Attachments: [2107 - Grant Application Form](#)  
[2107 - Attachment A: Expansion of Community-Based Services to Support Children with High Acuity Needs in Out-of-Home Care](#)