

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program is dedicated to upholding the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) mission of health equity to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, our Part C early intervention services. Our "First 1,000 Days Wisconsin Child Find Campaign" materials remain available to support local child find efforts, provide barrier-free access to the Birth to 3 Program, and promote an understanding of how early intervention helps children and their families. The campaign's media toolkit and materials are translated into English, Spanish, and Hmong to accommodate for the diverse populations participating Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program.

In addition to the materials and media toolkit, DHS published a "Comprehensive Child Find Checklist" as a tool to aid county Birth to 3 Programs in the establishment of a thorough child find system at a local level. DHS also published outreach resources for specific populations to promote equitable access and participation in Birth to 3 Program services.

Results and recommendations from the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot report "Piloting Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Wisconsin Birth to 3 Programs" is complete and awaiting publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Once published, it will be shared with the public and support identification of possible statewide initiatives.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

DHS identified that child find for children birth to 1 year has remained below the state goal, especially for targeted populations. DHS recognizes the opportunity to continually improve upon referrals and enrollment for children birth to one year old. DHS is committed to assisting local programs in identifying Birth to 3 Program-eligible-children earlier through the First 1,000 Days Child Find Campaign and the Child Find Outreach Resources (as explained above). A barrier that may impede on measuring equitable participation is monitoring the impact of these new targeted resources and subsequent enrollment. DHS understands that the creation of resources does not guarantee operational change to program practices.

Data has also shown that there is a higher disenrollment rate for families by demographic background and that survey responses from various demographics are lower than others.

In FFY 2023, the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program distributed 5,476 Family Experience Surveys and received 684 completed surveys, a response rate of 12.49%. The state increased its response rate from 11.85% in FY2022 to 12.49% in FFY 2023, an increase of 0.64%. The state has identified, however, a nonresponse bias for survey respondents identifying as Black or Hispanic/Latino. When comparing the 684 FFY 2023 responses, there was a -7.7% lower response rate for Black families and a -4.7% lower response rate for Hispanic/Latino families.”

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To address the barriers of children accessing the program under the age of 1, DHS has developed outreach materials for medical providers and therapy providers to encourage earlier and more equitable referrals.

DHS has also established cross-departmental partnership efforts through Wisconsin Wayfinder to educate and create better program understanding of eligibility criteria and referral process for cross-departmental, state-level and local program staff.

Additionally, DHS is conducting technical assistance outreach to county programs. This outreach will discuss practices with families of various demographics and determine potential areas of improved family engagement practices.

In May of each year, the Circles of Life Annual Conference is held for families with children with disabilities, providers, and other professionals who support them. The conference is an opportunity for state staff to hear from diverse families about their experiences in Wisconsin’s children’s disability programs. DHS plans to strengthen relationships with Wisconsin advocacy agencies, including Wisconsin FACETS and Family Voices. We aim to be more intentional when soliciting feedback from families on how to promote equitable access and participation in all children’s disability programs, including Wisconsin’s Birth to 3 Program.

DHS informs county Birth to 3 Programs of the child find federal regulations, program expectations, and published resources through bi-monthly teleconferences and government delivery messages. These communications aim to increase early referrals and enrollment of eligible infants and toddlers to the Birth to 3 Program. They also encourage the dissemination and utilization of child find resources at a local level for operational impact and equitable access to early intervention services.

To reduce future bias and promote survey responses, DHS will conduct more analysis at a local level to understand variability amongst counties and populations, identify potential interventions, and promote best practices across the state. As part of this effort, DHS’ Technical Assistance Center (TAC) will conduct outreach to Birth to 3 Programs that are underrepresented in Indicator 4 data as well as counties with populations for whom the data indicate a nonresponse bias. DHS hopes to identify specific barriers to completing the Family Experience Survey for these families and develop strategies to increase the response from these groups in the future.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Our professional development contracted entity, RESource, anticipates the release of their learning tracks on family engagement and culturally responsive practices by summer 2025. RESource will continue to attend higher education institutions throughout 2025 to promote early intervention careers and continue recruitment efforts. DHS will engage in regular meetings with RESource to assess workforce recruitment and retention efforts and determine additional actions to achieve a more diverse workforce. DHS plans to organize an Operational Impact Discussion (OID) with county Birth to 3 Programs in mid-2025 to address family engagement practices. DHS will continue to analyze the state's Indicator 5 data for improvements in early identification and referrals for children birth to 1-year olds in the Birth to 3 Program. Additionally, DHS will provide education on child find regulations, program expectations, and resources in the March and June 2025 teleconferences.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.