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DMS Numbered Memo 2019-08

To: County Birth to 3 Program Coordinators
County Department of Human Services Directors
County Department of Social Services Directors
County Department of Community Programs Directors
Long-Term Support Supervisors and Leads

From: Curtis J. Cunningham, Assistant Administrator
Long Term Care Benefits and Programs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis J. Cunningham".

Birth to 3 Program: Innovation in Social-Emotional Development Grants

Document Summary

This memo describes an opportunity for local Birth to 3 Programs to apply for one-time grants from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to fund projects that support the implementation of evidence-based practices and system changes to improve social-emotional outcomes for enrolled children. These grants are part of ongoing efforts to improve the social-emotional development of children enrolled in the Birth to 3 Program. Local Birth to 3 Programs are encouraged to apply for up to \$250,000 in funding that will be available in calendar year 2020. The deadline to apply is **January 31, 2020**.

Background

In 2013, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) introduced the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). OSEP required each state to develop a multi-year plan, identify specific areas of program improvement, and report program outcomes data for children served by early intervention programs. Establishing a State Identified Measureable Result (SiMR) to monitor progress on SSIP goals is a required component of the SSIP. Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program identified as its SiMR the percentage of children who enter the Birth to 3 Program below age expectations in positive social-emotional skills, including social relationships, who make greater than expected gains by the time they exit the program as measured by Indicator #3— child outcomes, summary statement 1A.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program, in collaboration with local programs, has initiated actions over the past several years to support statewide systemic improvement in the social-emotional development of enrolled children. While gains have been made, including meeting the 2017 SiMR target with 60% of children in the measure showing greater than expected gains in social and emotional development, Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program still illustrates a lower rate of gain than those achieved by most other states. A review of [national data](#) reveals that Wisconsin's gains in social-emotional development are among the lowest of all 50 states. According to national data there are states that achieve 80% and above of children in the measure showing greater than expected gains in social- emotional development.

Across the state, many Wisconsin counties have improved protections and strengthened supports for children with disabilities through ongoing efforts, and many counties have focused on initiatives to address the needs of families impacted by substance use and trauma. Additionally, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has undertaken promising initiatives to strengthen families, build resiliency, and focus efforts to reduce the likelihood of continued or future involvement in the child protective services system. The Birth to 3 Program's innovation in social-emotional development grants can be a catalyst to expand these efforts and further solidify these practices within local Birth to 3 Programs. Specifically, these grants are an opportunity for DHS to collaborate with local Birth to 3 Programs to explore and pilot focused efforts to impact the rate of change in the social-emotional development of children in early intervention and support children with special needs living and growing in the community. The grants are expected to provide insights into further statewide opportunities for advancing the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program's practices in the areas of social-emotional development.

Innovation in Social-Emotional Development Grants

To support local Birth to 3 Program efforts to improve the social-emotional development of children, the Bureau of Children's Services (BCS) will use Birth to 3 Program carryover monies to fund local programs in piloting initiatives that support the implementation of innovative ideas to bolster progress in social-emotional development. BCS will issue a total of **\$1,266,397** to local programs for projects that occur in 2020 and 2021. The grants will be awarded via a competitive review process. Local programs may request up to \$250,000 based on the scope and scale of the project proposed. Local Birth to 3 Programs may apply individually, collectively as a consortium, or both.

Project Models

Projects must meet the following criteria:

- Must specifically aim to impact the social-emotional needs and development of children in the Birth to 3 Program.
- May direct efforts at all Birth to 3 Program participants, but at a minimum must address participants that are enrolled through substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Must address the health of the whole family and build the capacity of the family to care for the child.
- Must aim to reduce the likelihood of a subsequent substantiation of child abuse or neglect or continued or future involvement in the child protective services system, such as removal or continued placement outside of the family home.

Although funding is not limited to these areas, example proposals for funding may include:

- Funding to purchase evidence-based screening and evaluation tools designed to identify delays in the social-emotional domain, as well as funding to train staff and implement the application of these tools. The local Birth to 3 Program should identify additional plans and strategies to ensure that the child's social-emotional concerns are addressed when the screening or evaluation tool identifies a social-emotional delay.

- Funding for training and supports that increase the competence and confidence of Birth to 3 Program team members in assessing the social-emotional needs of children in order to assist local Birth to 3 Programs in: identifying concerns parents have regarding the social-emotional development of their child; developing appropriate social-emotional outcomes and goals on children's individualized plans; and improving access to needed social-emotional services.
- Implementation of evidence-based interventions to address the social-emotional progress of enrolled children. Interventions should focus on improving the ability of children and families to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate emotions, and establish and maintain relationships. Proposed interventions should be grounded in principles of positive parenting and effective behavior change and provide strategies for promoting children's social-emotional development.

Award Terms

BCS intends to use this request for applications to award grants up to \$250,000 to local Birth to 3 Programs. The grants provide one-time funding expected to be used during the grant award period. Awards will be issued to local Birth to 3 Programs through a profile in CARS. If a consortium is selected, the funding will be assigned to the lead county.

Selected recipients must participate in a collaborative learning conference and quarterly conference calls, and provide a short presentation at the conclusion of the grant period. Annual project reports will be required, and must include brief summaries of progress and lessons learned.

Proposer Conference Call and Meeting Discussion

BCS will host a question and answer conference call on a date to be determined. Email your intent to participate in the call to dhsBirthto3@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Submission Deadline and Process

All applications are due by the close of business on **January 31, 2020**. The completed application must be received electronically by the Division of Medicaid Services, Bureau of Children's Services by the deadline, to the following email address: dhsBirthto3@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Timelines

- Announcement of awards and intent to pursue grant negotiations: March 31, 2020
- Year One project summary and fiscal reporting due to BCS: December 31, 2020.
- Year Two project summary and fiscal reporting due to BCS: December 31, 2021.
- Quarterly shared learning meetings—dates TBD
- Two annual project meetings—dates TBD

Application Scoring

Applications will be reviewed by a Grant Review Committee. Applicants shall not contact any evaluator without the Grant Review Committee Chair's written approval. Deborah Rathemel, Director, Bureau of Children's Services, is the Grant Review Committee Chair for this initiative.

Notification of Intent to Pursue Grant Negotiations

All applicants who respond to this request for applications will be notified by email of DHS's intent to pursue grant negotiations. After notification of intent is made, copies of applications will be publically posted on the DHS website for review.

Awards

Successful applicants will receive an amendment to their state-county contract for calendar years 2020 and 2021. All projects are expected to be finalized and related expenditures completed no later than December 31, 2021.

Right to Reject Applications and Negotiate Agreement Term

DHS reserves the right to reject any and all applications. DHS may negotiate the terms of the grant, including the award amount, with the selected applicant. If grant negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with the recommended applicant, DHS may terminate negotiations.

Each response package will be reviewed to verify the applicant meets the requirements specified in this request for applications based on a pass or fail protocol. This determination is at the sole discretion of BCS.

After the first year of the project and on request of either party, the grant amount planned for distribution in the second year may be renegotiated to allow for adjustments in overspending or underspending.

Application Process

Organize applications based on the five headings below. Describe the proposed project clearly and concisely within five pages. Applications must be submitted on a single-sided, single-spaced document with one-inch margins and a 12-point font (preferred is Times New Roman).

- I. Cover page (pass/fail) - not included in page count.** Indicate the program or programs involved, applying for funding. Include all mailing, email, and phone contact information for the program and those staff involved in the project (primary contact for the grant award, county director, etc.).
Local Birth to 3 Programs that choose to apply as part of a consortium must indicate a lead county, including all mailing, email, and phone contact information for the program.
If a county applies both individually and as a part of consortium, the county must indicate this on the cover page.
- II. Abstract (pass/fail) - not included in page count.** One paragraph (250 words maximum) summary of the project.
- III. Organization capacity (10 points)— two paragraph maximum.** Briefly describe the structure of the local Birth to 3 Program. Include provided services and those contracted along with the number of full-time equivalent employees and position titles, and how that structure will support the project proposal
- IV. Current situation (10 points)— two paragraph maximum.**
 - a. Needs assessment: Briefly describe the greatest needs, obstacles, and barriers to improving the social-emotional progress of children enrolled in the local Birth to 3 Program. Consider the severity of these challenges along with the potential for change and the impact of change.
 - b. Strengths assessment: List the greatest strengths, opportunities, and resources for improving the social-emotional progress of children enrolled in the local Birth to 3 Program.
- V. Project description (60 points) —two page maximum.**

- a. Brief project summary—project start date, an outline of project goals, and an estimated number of individuals served.
- b. Identification of the population to be served under this project and the criteria used to select individuals who will be served.
- c. A description of how the project will aim to impact the social-emotional health of the child and build the capacity of the family to care for the child.
- d. A description of how the project will reduce the likelihood of subsequent substantiations of child abuse or neglect or continued or future involvement in the child protective services system.
- e. A summary of why the local Birth to 3 Program believes this project will be successful and the difference the project would make in the lives of those served.
- f. Evaluation, effectiveness, and measurement. What will be the measures of the effectiveness of the project? How will the local Birth to 3 Program measure the impact of the project on Indicator 3?
- g. Plan for sustainability

VI. Budget (20 points)—separate page (two page maximum). Describe the projected budget for all expenses for the entire project. Programs may list a range of projected expenses with minimum and maximum totals. There must be sufficient detail and justification for each expense. Enter total projected cost ranges in whole dollar amounts by rounding to the nearest dollar.

Action Summary

- Local Birth to 3 Programs may apply individually, and/or as a consortium for innovation in social-emotional development grants.
- Applicants may set a range of costs with minimum required amounts to initiate the project and maximum amounts that may reasonably be used to complete the project.
- The deadline to apply is close of business on **January 31, 2020.**