**MEMO: Project Proposal for Early Childhood Interventions/Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences**

**DATE:**

TO: ABCGC: Subcommittee on Prevention

FROM:

**Executive Summary**

Proposed intervention: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).

Target population: Children and families who live in poverty, live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, have young parents, caregivers with substance use or mental health disorders, or parents with history of involvement in criminal justice system. Proposals for how to identify and refer families and children at risk for experiencing or who have experienced ACEs are welcomed from the Subcommittee.

Services:

Services include but are not limited to those interventions determined to promote and support healthy family development and the decrease of adverse childhood experiences. Services will be procured through a Problem-Based Procurement following a Results-Driven Contracting model. Using this framework, potential contractors will be presented with a set of problems that Bernalillo County needs help solving and be asked to offer solutions in the form of services that are within their organizational capacity to implement. More than one service model may be procured to facilitate learning as to what service models work best to ameliorate adverse childhood experiences and ultimately prevent bad behavioral health outcomes later in life.

Evidence base: To be reviewed during procurement.

Proposed outcome metrics:

* Reduced mental health disorders for children later in life.
* Reduced substance use for children later in life.
* Reduced instance of juvenile incarceration among children later in life.
* Decreased adverse events during pregnancy.
* Decreased child abuse.
* Access to key services to support child well-being.

Preliminary budget: CPI report recommends budget of approximately $750,000.00 for initial prevention initiatives.

Proposed language of recommendation to ABCGC: The ABCGC Subcommittee on Prevention recommends that Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque further develop a project to expand Early Childhood Interventions in Bernalillo County substantially as described in the Early Childhood Interventions Project Proposal.

**Proposed Intervention**

Children who live in poverty, live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, have young parents, or caregivers with substance use or mental health disorders are more likely to encounter adverse childhood experiences (ACE). The term ACE describes an occurrence in a child’s family or social environment that negatively affects the child, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse; violence against the child’s mother; living in a household with people experiencing substance abuse or mental illness; or incarceration of a parent. Children who experience frequent and/or severe ACEs are more likely to experience poor outcomes as an adult. Compared to individuals who report experiencing no ACEs, those who experience four or more ACEs are significantly more likely to have poor health and behavioral health outcomes later in life. Specific to behavioral health, those who experience 4 or more ACEs are significantly more likely to inject drugs, experience depression, and attempt suicide. Children who live in poverty, live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, have young parents, or caregivers with substance use or mental health disorders are much more likely to encounter adverse childhood experiences.

Unfortunately, children in Bernalillo County are more likely to have risk factors for ACEs than most children in the United States. Bernalillo County experiences high rates of child abuse, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse. Reducing the incidence of ACEs is critical to ensuring a healthy and prosperous future for Bernalillo County. In Bernalillo County,

* One in three mothers report experiencing at least three stressful events in the year before their child was born;
* The rate of substantiated child abuse has more than doubled since 2013, from 9.4 victims per 1,000 children to 21.2 victims per 1,000 children;
* In Albuquerque, 15% of children under age five live below the poverty level, with child poverty concentrated in certain geographical areas;
* 65% of births lack access to adequate prenatal care;
* Only 10% of families have access to home visitation services;
* Only 37% of New Mexico children have access to at least one developmental screening; and
* Only 39% of three and four year olds are enrolled in preschool.

Children who live in poverty, live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, have young parents, or caregivers with substance use or mental health disorders are more likely to encounter adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Children who experience frequent and/or severe ACEs are more likely to experience poor outcomes as an adult. Compared to individuals who report experiencing no ACEs, those who experience 4 or more ACEs are significantly more likely to inject drugs, experience depression, and attempt suicide.

This procurement should attract agencies that implement evidence-based services or bona-fide promising practices that reduce adverse childhood experiences in Bernalillo County children.

Community Partners, Inc.’s Behavioral Health Business Plan and the City/County Behavioral Health Task Force both recommended implementing early prevention and family interventions in Bernalillo County as a critical component of an enhanced system of behavioral health care.

**Potential Target Populations**

The target population is children and families who are at risk of experiencing or who have experienced adverse childhood experiences. This target population may include:

* Children and families who live in poverty;
* Children and families who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods;
* Families with young parents;
* Caregivers with substance use or mental health disorders;
* Infants and children up to age 5 and their families;
* Infants and children up to age 18 who have a parent in the criminal justice system and their families.

Proposals as to how to identify and refer children and families at risk of experiencing adverse childhood experiences or who have experienced them will be welcomed from the Subcommittee.

**Services**

Early Childhood Intervention services are characterized by voluntary participation. The mechanism for referral of families to early childhood services is undetermined. Services may include:

1. Direct support to the family home with skilled professional, early child home visiting programs.
2. Help parents develop parenting and life skills, improve financial literacy and achieve educational and employment goals.
3. Increase social supports like babysitting and high quality childcare.
4. Combine home visitation with the structural supports necessary to support fathers, women and children.
5. Multigenerational programming that works with all caregivers within a family system.

The following are two examples of evidence based services:

1. Triple-P Positive Parenting Program: a professional training program that prepares pediatricians, child welfare workers, and others to provide evidence-based parenting education to at-risk families.
2. Nurse-Family Partnership: a program that brings information and support directly to the family home within the context of a relationship with a skilled professional. Early child home visiting programs help parents develop parenting and life skills, improve financial literacy and achieve educational and employment goals.

Special consideration will be given to programs/organizations that can demonstrate deep connections to the communities they serve, staff comprised of community members with close connections to the community, and interventions across multiple levels to support and build upon the strength and resilience of families and communities.

**Evidence Base**

Bernalillo County does not expect every program to have an equally strong evidence base, but rather expects providers to be aware of the evidence base for their proposed program(s) and proactively plan and adjust intake, management, and evaluation strategies based on the best evidence available. Preference will be given to respondents who present compelling evidence that their program(s) will have a meaningful and observable impact on the children and families in their service. Evidence-based programs, evidence-informed programs, and promising innovative programs developed with deep knowledge of Bernalillo County’s target population and environment will all be considered.

**Proposed Outcome Metrics**

While potential contractors would be asked to propose outcome metrics specific to their proposed services, general targeted outcomes should include:

* Reduced mental health disorders for children later in life.
* Reduced substance use for children later in life.
* Reduced instance of juvenile incarceration among children later in life.
* Decreased adverse events during pregnancy.
* Decreased child abuse
* Access to key services to support child well-being.

Outcomes should be measured through the most rigorous evaluation methodology possible. The County and City will work with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab and a contracted evaluator to design an appropriate evaluation of the services. The evaluation will then be implemented by the contracted evaluator.

In addition to evaluating the efficacy of the program at achieving outcome metrics and cost savings, the County and City will track process goals on a regular basis. Process goals will include but are not limited to:

* The ability of the selected service provider(s) to enroll referred individuals who are identified as appropriate for the program;
* The ability of the selected service provider(s) to keep clients in the program and meeting pre-specified benchmarks for a year or more.

**Preliminary Budget and Possible Funding Sources**

Preliminary Budget

CPI report recommends budget of approximately $750,000.00 for initial prevention initiatives.

Possible Leveraged Funding Sources

TBD; Medicaid does not support most early childhood interventions.

**Proposed Language of Recommendation to ABCGC**

The ABCGC Subcommittee on Prevention recommends that Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque further develop a project to expand Early Childhood Interventions in Bernalillo County substantially as described in the Early Childhood Interventions Project Proposal.

Possible additional language if needed

The ABCGC Subcommittee on Prevention further recommends that Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque consider the following in pursuit of this project:

* [to be filled in by Subcommittee]
* [example: identifying potential client families and children through a screening process upon parent’s booking into MDC or upon release from MDC.]

References

1. Dube, S. R., Felitti, V. J., Dong, M., Chapman, D. P., Giles, W. H., & Anda, R. F. (2003). Childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction and the risk of illicit drug use: The adverse childhood experiences study. Pediatrics, 111(3), 564-572.
2. Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., . . . Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14(4), 245-258. doi:S0749379798000178 [pii]