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*** MEETING MINUTES ***

Minutes of the May 9, 2023, Program Committee Meeting

Trustee	Web meeting
Julia López, Committee Chair	X
Ronald Griffin	X
Rob Poirier	Met separately with S. Muhammad 05.08.23 – 5:00 PM

Others Attending:

Cassandra Kaufman, Executive Director
 Serena Muhammad, Deputy Director

1. **Call to Order** – The virtual meeting of the MHB Program Committee was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Julia López.
2. **Approval of September 6, 2022 Minutes** – Chair Julia López moved and Ronald Griffin seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 6, 2022. The motion passed.
3. **Early Childhood Facility Partnership** – Deputy Director Serena Muhammad briefed the Committee on Joyful Spaces: An ECE Quality & Sustainability Project (Joyful Spaces). When the Community Children’s Services Early Childhood Fund (CCSF-EC) was established, MHB set-aside 25% of the collected tax revenue (\$575,000) in FY23 to address emerging needs.

In the FY23-25 CCSF – EC application process, MHB awarded funding to three early childhood (EC) intermediaries to work with childcare providers to improve program quality. Through the three intermediaries’ work with EC providers, facility improvement was identified as an unmet need contributing to quality and required by some providers in order to become licensed and/or accredited. Additionally, during the Early Childhood American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund distribution partnership with the City of St. Louis Community Development Administration (CDA), MHB and the City of St. Louis also identified facility repairs as an unmet need.

At the January 14, 2023 Board Retreat, Trustees approved \$200,000 from the \$575,000 which had been set aside for FY23 to create an EC facility fund. In February 2023, MHB staff met with the three funded EC Intermediaries to understand their capacity to manage a facility improvement fund. In March 2023, IFF and the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance (Alliance) were identified as partners with expertise in facility improvement, as the two organizations had already established the Joyful Spaces Project.

Early in 2022, the Alliance convened a Capacity Building Action Group that identified, “the lack of access to capital for facility improvements/enhancements,” as one of three primary challenges faced by the early childhood provider community. Additionally, the group called out that racial inequities continue to dictate who and what types of programs have access to facilities capital and support overall.

The Alliance and IFF developed Joyful Spaces as a mechanism to ensure that funding is equitably available to support and sustain the operational and facility-related needs of EC programs. The project will focus on three key components: administrative capacity building within EC programs, facilities assessment/planning, and facilities–focused capital in the form of both very low interest loans and a grant fund.

Goal: To improve quality across the EC system, leading to increased access and better outcomes for children and families.

Objective: 25 St. Louis City EC providers will complete training and have access to facility improvement grants and/or loans.

Program Committee Recommendation – It is recommended that the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance manage MHB’s investment of up to \$575,000 from FY23 CCSF – EC funding set-aside for emerging needs, for the purpose of early childhood facilities improvement and that unspent funds from the FY23 set-aside be carried forward for use in FY24. This recommendation will amend and supersede the \$200,000 facility improvement funding approved in January 2023 to include an additional \$15,867 for a total of \$215,867, to design and implement a web-based tool and capacity building program for Facilities Assessment and Planning to be led by EC peers. Additionally, it is recommended up to an additional \$359,133 from the \$575,000 CCSF—EC set-aside be allocated toward a Pooled Facilities–Focused Grant Fund to be managed by IFF, in partnership with the Alliance.

Staff informed the Committee that funding contributed by MHB to the Facilities–Focused Grant Fund would leverage a 100% match from an Anonymous Donor. Committee members asked if MHB was the only entity paying for city EC providers and if the match would also be dedicated to city EC providers? Staff responded that 25 city providers would have access to the funds at the level of investment recommended by the Committee.

4. **CCSF Emerging Needs – St. Louis Family Court Family Subcontracted Services** – In November 2022, the St. Louis City Family Court shared with MHB staff the significant challenges they encountered in serving children under the care of the Missouri Children’s Division (due to severe staff shortages in the Children’s Division). For more than a year, Children’s Division (CD) Case Managers had not adequately performed critical tasks to support families, such as:
- Connecting families to court ordered services, connecting children to therapy, and making referrals for psychological evaluations; and
 - Ensuring visits between parents and children, helping parents be successful when children are placed back in the home on a trial home visit, and expediting placement changes when a provider (foster parent, hospital, residential facility) requests immediate removal of a child.

As a result, the Family Court experienced a significant increase in the demand for mental health services and support from CD youth and families. Currently, the program's services include:

1. Co-Parenting Counseling
2. Counseling/Therapy
3. Life Skills
4. Mentoring
5. Occupational Therapy
6. Parenting Classes
7. Psycho-Sexual Evaluation
8. Sex Offender Specific Treatment

Program Committee Recommendation – It is recommended that an additional two years of funding (FY24 – FY25) be approved to continue support of Family Subcontracted Services through the remainder of the three-year FY23 – 25 CCSF Cycle. It is further recommended that funding be increased from \$70,000 to \$150,000 per year to enable the Family Court to meet the increased demand for services and to serve children and their families not currently being served by the Missouri Children's Division. Lastly, it is recommended that \$150,000 from the FY23 CCSF Emerging Needs Fund be made available for this program in FY24.

With the additional funding, the Family Court will increase the number of participants served annually from 87 to 300 by including families who are not currently receiving support from the Children's Division. Secondly, additional funding will offset the increased cost of therapy from \$70 per hour to \$85 due to inflation and the increased Medicaid reimbursement rate of \$119.74 which took effect July 1, 2022. Currently, the Court provides partial funding to support this program, and is therefore required to provide therapy services at the approved Medicaid rate.

5. **System of Care St. Louis Family Support Partner Program** – MHB has convened the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) System of Care (SOC) since 2014 when a one-year planning grant was received. Since that time, MHB has received two consecutive four-year Cooperative Agreements from SAMHSA to support the needs of children with serious emotional disturbance and their families to be successful at home, at school, and in the community, serving residents of St. Louis City and St. Louis County.

The current Cooperative Agreement is focused on serving children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) that are also justice involved. As a primary strategy to address the complex and varied needs of these children and their families, SOC established the first Family Support Partner (FSP) program in St. Louis City and St. Louis County delivered by Vision for Children at Risk. The program pairs children and their families with a Family Support Partner (FSP) who has lived experience navigating the juvenile justice system and the children's mental health system. FSPs are all parents or family members of a child with an SED who has received or is currently receiving services from the children's mental health service system.

Goal: To help children and their parents/caregivers achieve family well-being

Objective: 50 families will work with a Family Support Partner to achieve participant-defined behavioral health goals as measured by the Family Journey Assessment

Services: Are provided to families in a person-centered manner. FSPs provide one-on-one coaching opportunities that involve actively and reflectively listening to parents/caregivers to help them identify SMART goals that will outline the support requested by the family:

- Orientation/Enrollment – first three-months includes a minimum of weekly visits
- From 3 – 6 months of active enrollment, families receive bi-weekly meetings
- From 6 – 12 months of active enrollment, families receive monthly meetings while they are working to establish self-sufficiency towards a successful transition plan

Creating a Braided Fund in Partnership with the St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund

In 2022, the FSP Program served 124 families (85 from St. Louis County and 39 from St. Louis City). The annual cost of serving a single family is \$3,600. Through partnerships with Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH) Administrative Agents BJC Behavioral Health (serves South St. Louis City and St. Louis County) and ALM Hopewell (serves North St. Louis City), SOC has covered 15% of the program’s costs through Medicaid.

The St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund’s Board of Directors met May 10, 2023, and approved a request for \$382,500 in funding to serve 125 St. Louis County families in FY24 following the conclusion of the existing Cooperative Agreement that ends September 29, 2023. This is the first step in establishing a braided fund to serve St. Louis County and St. Louis City families.

Program Committee Recommendation

In an effort to continue a highly successful program that serves children with an SED and their families and to increase the number of non-Medicaid eligible families to be served, the following is recommended:

1. Create a braided fund in partnership with the St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund (CSF) in FY24
2. Allocate \$180,000 in Community Children’s Services Funding in FY24 to Vision for Children at Risk to provide Family Support Partner services to 50 city families

The \$562,500 in braided funding would increase the number of families served to 175 in St. Louis City and St. Louis County and allow CSF and MHB time to pursue leveraging a 2:1 Medicaid match for eligible children in partnership with the State of Missouri through the Department of Mental Health.

6. **CCSF Renewal Requests** – MHB’s Finance-Investment Committee met April 12, 2023, approving a 6.0% COLA for eligible Community Children’s Services Fund projects in FY24. Following the FY24 Renewal Application Process, Staff presented the Committee with the following recommendations:

Allocate up to a maximum of \$9,042,762 in FY24 from the Community Children’s Services Fund for:

- **CCSF Competitive Grants** – Renewal of year two of the three-year grant cycle for 35 currently funded competitive grants up to \$6,849,218 and 11 early childhood competitive grants up to \$2,093,544; and
- **Strategic Initiatives: Mayor’s Office for Children, Youth and Families** – Through a partnership with the Incarnate Word Foundation, St. Louis Community Foundation, and MHB, the three funders have executed a Memorandum of Partnership with the City of St. Louis Mayor’s Office for FY23 – 25 to provide support toward the salary and expenses of the Senior Advisor to the Mayor for Children, Youth & Families in the amount of \$60,000; and

- **Strategic Initiatives: St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission** – MHB has provided \$40,000 toward the salary and fringe expense for the Commission’s Director since 2017. The recommendation is to continue this three-year FY23 – 25 CCSF commitment to provide the same level of support in FY24.
7. **Adjournment** – There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.