Family Focus Receives Grant From the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation to Expand Medicaid Support

Family Focus received a $50,000 grant from the J. B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation to lead an effort to improve access to Medicaid reimbursement for human services in our region. President and CEO, Merri Ex, presented the request on behalf of the Chicago Alliance for Collaborative Effort (CACE). CACE is comprised of the CEOs of 30 human service organizations with budgets over $10 million. CACE annually serves over two million participants with a broad array of services throughout the state. CACE agencies employ 11,000 professional staff and manage more than 35,000 volunteers, with more than $1.25 billion in annual operating budgets.

CACE was advised that they should seek funding for these essential services from the federal government through the Medicaid program due to the Illinois state budget impasse and diminishing resources for human services. Julie Hamos is a member of Family Focus’ board of directors; prior to that, she was the director of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, where she managed the state’s Medicaid program. Hamos was invited to a CACE meeting and encouraged the group to identify support to create a collaborative infrastructure to access Medicaid funding.

The grant from the Pritzker Foundation will fund a healthcare consultant to unlock these alternate sources of public capital. By creating a multi-agency effort, CACE and our region’s human services sector will be in an advantageous position to achieve efficiencies of operation and contracting with managed care organizations. The proposed Human Services Medicaid Project (HSMP) will create an infrastructure to maximize Medicaid reimbursements for the human services.

Dr. Colleen Cicchetti Speaks About Childhood Trauma at Annual Meeting

Dr. Colleen Cicchetti, executive director of the Center for Childhood Resilience at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital, presented research at Family Focus’ March 7th annual meeting. She reported that more than 40% of children and adolescents receiving services from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network have experienced four or more different types of trauma and adversity.

Traumatic events are emotionally painful or distressful events that prompt an abnormally intense or prolonged stress response with lasting physical and mental effects. Other key points shared:

- Adults who have experienced four or more instances of Adverse Childhood Experiences before the age of 18 have increased risk for negative mental health and physical health outcomes. They are 12 times more likely to attempt suicide, 10 times more likely to inject street drugs, and 2 times more likely to have a stroke, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. (Source: ACES Study)

- Early traumatic events change how the brain physically develops, thus impairing social, emotional and cognitive thinking. Traumatic experiences alter the neuron connections that are made during early childhood development.

- We can do things to prevent these negative outcomes, including intervening at the social, emotional and cognitive level; capitalizing on the brain’s plasticity and ability to promote healthier development; developing connections with parents, caregivers...

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2017 Annual Report Now Online

Family Focus’ 2016 Annual Report is now available electronically on our website under the Financial Publications tab at www.family-focus.org
**Family Focus Goes BLUE for Prevent Child Abuse Month**

All Family Focus social media went blue for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Each week highlighted a different educational theme related to preventing child abuse, as well as offering information and resources. Join us by following Family Focus on social media and sharing our posts:

- Twitter: @familyfocus_org
- Facebook: Family Focus

Find out more on our website at www.family-focus.org/go-blue

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**Proposed Federal Budget Cuts Funding for 21st Century Program**

President Trump’s new federal budget could cut funding for vital social service programs, including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative. 21st Century provides funding for afterschool programs across the U.S. The budget is heading to congress for debates and voting.

Currently, Family Focus serves 1,711 students in 16 schools using the 21st Century program, and is seeing tremendous results: 40% of students increased their reading and math grades, 67% of students improved their participation in class and academic performance, and 52% of students with failing math and reading grades (D or F) increased their grades to a C or higher by the end of the school year.

These programs keep children and teenagers safe during peak hours of afterschool violence, inspire young people to learn, and support working families. [Join us in opposing the elimination of these vital funds. Visit our website to download a template letter to send to your local representative.](www.family-focus.org/go-blue)

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**Data Project Launching This Month at Lawndale**

After a year of planning, Family Focus’ data project is ready for a pilot program at the Lawndale center. A grant in 2015 created the data project to develop a cohesive evaluation process for early childhood programs. We have identified key data, data collection strategies and research tools to assist us in setting meaningful outcomes to measure our impact in the areas of academic success, positive life skills and empowerment. The grant included technical assistance through Children’s Home + Aid and will fund a program analyst consultant who provides expertise and designs tools for gathering information. The pilot program will utilize the Chicago Ready to Learn early childhood program and Piccolo, an evidence-based assessment tool that measures parent/child interaction. We plan to have a complete data set by spring of 2018.

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**Bernice Weissbourd Receives Keys to the City of Evanston**

At a special ceremony at Evanston City Hall, Family Focus Founder Bernice Weissbourd received the keys to the city, along with Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro, and Bishop Carlis Moody. Fifth Ward Alderman and first Family Focus Director Delores Holmes said, “As a former Family Focus employee it was my pleasure to be a part of the city presenting the Key to the City to Bernice who has always worked for children and families in Evanston as well as all over the country.”

(L-R): Mayor Elizabeth Beidler Tisdahl, Bernice Weissbourd and Alderman Delores Holmes

Photo: Evanston Now
Family Focus’ mission is to promote the well-being of children from birth by supporting and strengthening families in and with their communities.

Join Family Focus for our Anniversary Gala on May 25
Four Seasons Hotel, 120 East Delaware Place, Chicago

$350 for an individual ticket  6:00 PM | Reception
$500 for a Friend ticket  7:00 PM | Dinner and Program

We are honored to present the Bernice Weissbourd Award for Family Support to:

Presented to David Hiller, President and CEO  The Kiphart Family

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation has committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens for over 60 years. The foundation has supported Family Focus with more than $1 million in grants and gifts, playing a critical role in supporting our programming. We are delighted to also recognize the Kiphart Family, as Susie and Dick Kiphart have been passionate donors and advocates for Family Focus since getting involved with our Evanston center more than 15 years ago. We sadly lost Dick Kiphart last year, but his and his family’s legacy continues to live on every day in many Chicagoland organizations. Ticket, table, and sponsorship information is available on our website.

ANNUAL MEETING (continued from page 1)

...and adults; providing opportunities for positive experiences in the community (school, church, and neighborhood); and supporting the development of personal qualities, coping resources, courage and leadership. At the community level, we can focus on improving physical environments and economic opportunities critical to the success of healing community trauma. Trauma support is a key component of program services at Family Focus.

Stephanie, a participant at Family Focus’s Lawndale center, shared her own story at the annual meeting. (See Stephanie’s story on page 4.) Responding to Stephanie’s story, Dr. Cicchetti said, “Stephanie knew that Family Focus had her back and got her what she needed. That’s the challenge we have. Resilience comes from a strong bond with an adult.”

Please consider a gift to Family Focus in your will and estate plans. Contact Steve Majsak at 312-777-1923 or email steve.majsak@family-focus.org for more information.
Stephanie’s Story

Special thanks to Stephanie, the Family Focus participant who shared her story at Family Focus’ Annual Meeting on March 7th at the National Hellenic Museum.

“I hooked up with Family Focus when I switched my doctor’s office to the Lawndale Christian Center next to Family Focus Lawndale. I needed support for my son who is developmentally delayed – both in his speech and his overall development. It’s hard for me when he can’t communicate the way he wants to. I think his developmental delay is partially due to being moved from shelter to shelter when we were homeless. In a shelter, sometimes you’re all in a room no bigger than a hotel room—four of us and our clothes and toys. There’s no room to move around. It’s been a struggle for my kids and it’s been a struggle for me.

Being in the Family Focus group is very uplifting. It’s a place we can talk about issues. It’s a time for me to release my baggage. I have an excellent relationship with Kimberly, my home visitor. Even in the middle of the night I can text her and she responds early the next morning. Kimberly has been helping me work on my son’s motor skills by doing activities with cars and moving his arms and feet. He’s responding very well and is now saying more words than he did in the past. He’s not used to being around kids. When I bring him to group at Family Focus, he lights up when he gets that interaction with other kids.

Now I’m going back to school. I’m 39, and I’ve been trying to do that since I graduated high school. I never had the support. Now I do. I have a supportive spouse and I’m in my own home. Family Focus has already changed me. I’m a better mother. I’m learning how to manage and give my children equal time, and how to manage anger. My son is getting better, and every day I tell my daughter that she is beautiful and she can be whatever she wants.”