

CHILDREN SERVICES PRIORITY OF FUNDING

BACKGROUND

The 2014/15 Indian River County (IRC) Community Needs Assessment provided valuable information to help guide the Children Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) in identifying essential children's services. Parts of this data was re-evaluated in 2018. Grant requests will be considered based on the criteria outlined below.

LARGER PICTURE

The community must start taking a long-term view focusing 15-25 years out. We have a cycle of poverty in IRC that has been increasing and needs to be broken.

Interventions should start as early as possible in a child's life in order to have the greatest impact.

IRC agencies should use best practices.

- a. Evidence based with measurable outcomes over time
- b. Cost effective/efficient
- c. Skilled executive, program, and board leadership
- d. Strong fiscal management
- e. Opportunity for broad impact (replicable, scalable, lever gable)

Focus should be on the pockets of poverty. Given that IRC poverty is in geographically disbursed pockets and that we have unique transportation problems, we must always keep in mind that services need to be available where and when people need and can access them. We must utilize the best mediums to clearly communicate what, when and where these services are available.

Collaboration in the community is essential and can help optimize human and financial resources, expose and eliminate overlap.

The considerations highlighted above have precedence over the actual CSAC Focus Areas listed below.

FOCUS AREAS OF NEED (ranked in order by the Advisory Team at the completion of the Needs Assessment process and updated for clarity)

Mental health affects every Focus Area. We have decided not to make mental health a separate Focus Area, but to evaluate mental health interventions relevant to each Focus Area.

1. Early Childhood Development

This encompasses birth to age 5. For the younger children this would mean improving the interactions they have beginning at birth with their caregivers and with focus on physical, social emotional and cognitive development. It would include improving the quality at childcare, PreK and Voluntary PreK providers as well as improving financial accessibility by leveraging available federal and state funds.

Why: Research shows that the period 0-5 is the most important time for brain development. Physical, social emotional and cognitive skills can be significantly impacted during this time.

2. Build Parent Capacity

This encompasses improving parenting skills at every age of a child's life and providing support mechanisms for parents, including the pre-natal period. A priority would be new parents in particular first time and single parents and those in the poverty pockets.

Why: A parent is a child's first and most important teacher. We need to equip parents to be the good parents that they all want to be.

3. After school and summer recreational activities and academic enrichment programs

They need to be free/affordable and accessible (transportation) to parents and children. They should include a literacy/tutoring component. We hold agencies to a high standard of what constitutes academic enrichment. Mentoring programs are included. There is a large gap of programs for children 12+.

Why: Children need to develop positive out of school outlets that keep them engaged in school, promote their health and provide connections (to sports/hobbies, a person or group, etc.). There is a wealth of data supporting extended day and extended year.

4. Middle and High School programs that address risky behavior

Programs that help adolescents and teens develop the tools to become productive, healthy and law-abiding citizens and address risky behavior (alcohol, tobacco, vaping, drugs, delinquency, teen pregnancy, STDs, bullying, etc.)

Why: There is a lot of at-risk behavior and we need to ensure that it is addressed early and repeatedly.