

**2022-2023 PRIORITY OF FUNDING
CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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A comprehensive, community-wide needs assessment provides valuable information to help guide the Children Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) in identifying essential children's services and areas of focus to address both the unmet and under-met needs of children. This year's funding priorities are the result of the 2019-2020 Community Needs Assessment and the annual re-evaluation of its data. The Focus Areas of Need are ranked in order of priority.

Due to the large impact of Covid-19 on our community, special focus will be on areas that have been most impacted such as trauma and mental health of children, regression in school and increased substance use. Priority will be given to evidence-based programs that can address these challenges.

1. Early Childhood Development

This encompasses birth to age 5. For the younger children this would mean improving their interactions with caregivers beginning at birth and with focus on physical, social emotional and cognitive development. It would include improving the quality of childcare, Pre-K and Voluntary Pre-K providers. Providers must complete developmental screenings at appropriate intervals and make referrals where necessary.

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

2. Quality remediation and enrichment programs that include a meaningful component of social emotional skill building and academic instruction

Programs should be free/affordable and accessible (transportation) to parents and children. They should include quality instruction, be properly staffed and have enough dosing to make a meaningful impact on a child. We hold agencies to a high standard of what constitutes academic enrichment and intervention. Mentoring programs are included.

Why? Children need to develop positive in and out of school outlets that keep them engaged in learning, promote their physical, emotional and mental health. There is a wealth of data supporting quality research-based intervention, extended day programs and extended year.

3. 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. Parents should be taught the importance of wellness of the whole child (medical, dental, mental health and developmental) in addition to meeting their basic needs. A priority would be new parents, first-time and single parents and those in the poverty pockets. Additionally, parents need to be assisted in obtaining developmental screenings at all stages of a child's development starting at 2 months.

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

4. Programs that address risky youth behavior

Evidence-based programs that help children and teens develop the tools to become productive, healthy, law-abiding citizens and address risky behavior (e.g., chronic absenteeism, substance use, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, STDs, bullying, depression and other mental health problems.)

Why? Nonacademic risk factors like absenteeism, mental illness, and substance abuse among youth are associated with adverse outcomes (e.g., high school dropout, criminal justice involvement, unemployment, etc.). Evidenced-based prevention, early intervention, and intensive, individualized interventions are needed to promote success and well-being of individuals, families, and the greater community.