

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Accessing Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Young Children and Caregivers

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Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve the lives of young children in Philadelphia. The Foundation's Children and Families program was created to expand access to programs and resources that support the healthy development and academic success of young children, ages 0 to 8, in Philadelphia. A full description of the Children and Families program, its goal, and its objectives can be found on the Foundation's website. This specific Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

By 2028, the Foundation will make at least 10 investments related to accessing mental and behavioral health services for young children and caregivers experiencing service shortages; these investments will help inform future Foundation investments.

This objective was developed after extensive conversations with key stakeholders from the mental and behavioral health sector. We heard the need for increased resources to support culturally responsive and trauma-informed services; streamline service intake and eligibility processes; reduce wait times for screening and intervention; increase workforce recruitment and retention; and embed mental health services within existing family serving community-based organizations. This RFP seeks to address these challenges by funding projects that will increase access for families with young children (from birth to age 8), who are in need of mental and behavioral health services.

According to the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), mental and behavioral health services are a continuum of prevention, assessment, treatment, and support practices that promote emotional well-being, address mental health conditions, and encourage healthy behaviors across the lifespan.¹

We know that, in many cases, the terms mental and behavioral health are used interchangeably. We encourage applicants to determine which of these terms best describes the work that is being proposed. For the purpose of this RFP, we will use MBH to refer to Mental and Behavioral Health services.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to increasing access to MBH services for Philadelphia's young children and caregivers. For this RFP, we will prioritize proposals that focus on direct service, care coordination that helps connect families to needed MBH services, and/or policy or system change. Organizations may choose a small geographic focus or may seek to make change on a citywide scale.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will make tangible improvements in the quality of life for residents of Philadelphia. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 7 and 8 of this document.

Why is the Foundation using a Request for Proposals to advance this objective?

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals for several reasons. First, we believe that stakeholders across the region have a great deal of expertise and experience that can be supported to make progress on an objective that we heard was important to communities in our region. We want to hear about the impactful projects that are underway or could get underway and need funding. Second, we want to be as transparent as possible about the opportunity for non-profit organizations in the region to secure funding for work to advance this objective.

This RFP seeks projects that will increase access to mental and behavioral health services for young children, aged 0 to 8, and their caregivers in Philadelphia.

¹ [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\), \(2023\). Behavioral Health Services. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.](#)

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) refers to mental and behavioral health as our “emotional, psychological, and social well-being.” It affects how we think, feel, and act. Some mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can begin in early childhood. Mental health services for caregivers and their children during early childhood can help support strong parent/child relationships, promote positive parenting practices, and help children learn to manage symptoms that may present barriers in social and educational settings.

Children in Philadelphia who reside in communities that are heavily impacted by poverty often endure a high rate of adverse-childhood experiences (ACEs) – abuse, neglect, or household challenges – that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.² According to the 2017 Place Matters report by the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), mental health risk index scores for 85% of Philadelphia zip codes were above the national average for need.³

According to the Zero To Three Think Babies Campaign, early treatment of mental and behavioral health concerns can help prevent more serious disorders in adulthood.⁴ Lack of culturally and linguistically competent staff, workforce shortages, long waitlists, and services that are inaccessible to local neighborhoods make it difficult or impossible for children and their caregivers to access mental health services.

Children residing in low-income communities in Philadelphia face an average wait of 15 days for an initial MBH appointment, twice the mandated time.⁵



² Public Health Management Corporation, (2013). *Philadelphia Urban ACE Study*.

³ Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services and Scattergood Foundation, (2017). *Place Matters*.

⁴ Zero To Three, (2023). “Yes, Mental Health Includes Babies.”

⁵ Public Citizens for Children and Youth, (2013). *Fifteen Days and Counting: Philadelphia Children Wait Too Long for Behavioral Health Help*.

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support efforts that increase access to mental and behavioral health services for caregivers and young children in Philadelphia. Funding will be limited to projects that will positively impact families with young children, ages 0-8, who have traditionally faced barriers to service for reasons including, but not limited to, limited income, insufficient availability of treatment, inaccessible treatment sites, cultural and/or linguistic barriers, immigration status, and limited awareness of existing services.

Proposals for funding through this RFP must include activities that do at least one of the following:

1. Increase the number of licensed MBH providers serving young children who participate in Medical Assistance (Medicaid).
2. Increase the number of culturally and linguistically competent professionals serving in community-based settings.
3. Expand the reach of existing comprehensive MBH services for young children in geographic areas of the city with the greatest need. Priority will be given to proposals that address service needs in Philadelphia's top ten "high risk" zip codes, according to the Risk Index published in the 2017 DBHIDS Place Matters report: 19120, 19121, 19122, 19124, 19132, 19133, 19134, 19139, 19140, 19142
4. Advocate for policies that increase access to MBH services for families with young children (prenatal to age 8).
5. Provide MBH care coordination, a system used by child and family serving professionals for efficient, cross-programmatic communication regarding MBH services.
6. Provide screening and assessment for MBH services for families with young children (birth to age 8) or those who are pregnant.
7. Offer training for children and family serving professionals that establishes or strengthens access to direct MBH services.

Please note, under this RFP, the Foundation will **not** consider proposals to support the following:

1. Physical health services such as well child and adult exams or treatment.
2. Services currently covered through Medicaid's Behavioral Health Choices program.
3. Drug and alcohol addiction treatment.
4. Services to children and families covered under Pennsylvania's Early Intervention program.
5. Capital projects/facility improvements.
6. Projects that do not have established evidence of implementation and impact (i.e., no pilot programs or studies to establish efficacy or effectiveness will be funded).

We are requesting proposals for **up to three years of funding**. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise to reach proposed goals.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many different tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. All proposals that meet the review criteria described below are encouraged.

WPF has **\$7.5 million available** to advance this objective through this RFP. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective. The maximum amount of funding that organizations may request for project expenses is \$1M over three years. (This does not include the overhead amount that will be added to project budgets, based on a formula described on the “How to Apply” section of our website).

At least \$1 million of the total amount awarded under this RFP will be reserved for grants to organizations that have budgets under \$5 million per year and/or are led by individuals who are members of groups with a history of discrimination or exclusion.

Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Public charities include community-based organizations, schools and educational institutions, and other types of public-serving groups. Government entities are also eligible to apply.

Proposed projects must occur in Philadelphia and serve families who are residents of Philadelphia.

Existing grantees currently receiving funding to advance this objective cannot request additional funds for their current projects.

Before you apply, please review the questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to the questions, this funding opportunity may be relevant to you. If you respond “no” to any of the questions, this opportunity is not a good match for your project, and you should not apply.

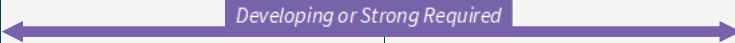

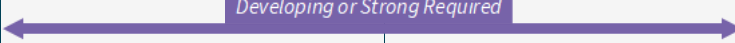
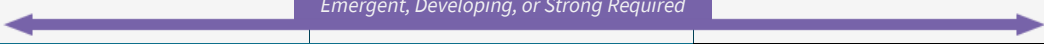
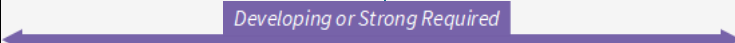
Is your proposal:

	YES	NO
Advancing access to mental/behavioral health services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focused primarily on children from birth to age 8 and/or their caregivers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving only families who reside in Philadelphia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focused primarily on families impacted by poverty or other risk factors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review all of the criteria on the following pages and make sure that your program aligns with those.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the criteria below. **Applicants should address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.**

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project conveys no meaningful connection to the objective.	Project would make a marginal and/or uncertain contribution to advancing the objective.	Project would make a clear contribution to advancing the objective.	Project would make a clear and significant contribution to advancing the objective.
			
Program Design and Feasibility			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Proposal does not provide a clear approach to the work. Anticipated outcomes and success are not well-defined.	Proposal describes an approach to the work, but some aspects are vague, difficult to understand or seem unrealistic. Anticipated outcomes are defined, but are of uncertain achievability, based on the details provided.	Proposal provides a clear approach but could be more specific. Anticipated outcomes require further clarification to assess feasibility.	Proposal provides a clear and feasible plan to implement the work and includes a solid justification for anticipated outcomes.
			
Partnerships and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No potential partners or plans for collaboration.	Potential partners relevant to the project are identified but there are no clear commitments.	Some committed partnerships relevant to the project, a plan to build any necessary new partnerships, and a description of each partner's role.	Sufficient committed partnerships relevant to the project, a description of each partner's role, and a track record of successful collaboration.
			
Organizational Experience			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No implementation experience and no track record of success.	Less than three years of experience with advancing the specified objective and a limited track record of success.	Three to five years of experience advancing the specified objective and success in Philadelphia or other relevant cities or regions.	More than five years of experience advancing the specified objective and an extensive track record of success in Philadelphia and/or Pennsylvania.
			
Community Knowledge and Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed project and no plan for future engagement.	Minimal evidence of familiarity with intended beneficiaries of the proposed project, but there is a commitment to develop a stakeholder engagement plan during implementation.	Evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed project and there is a plan for ongoing stakeholder engagement during implementation.	Key components of the project were informed by the intended beneficiaries of the proposed project and there is a plan for ongoing engagement during implementation.
			

Additional expectations:

Focus Population	Proposals should focus on providing supports for traditionally marginalized communities including low-income, BIPOC, and non-English language speakers.
Service Quality	Interventions should employ a model that has been shown to be effective and culturally and linguistically relevant for the population being served.
Accessibility	For proposals that include direct services, planned services should take place in accessible locations, during convenient times, with consistently available language supports for non-English speaking individuals.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results.
Geography	Priority will be given to proposals that address service needs in Philadelphia’s top ten “high risk” zip codes, according to the Risk Index published in the 2017 DBHIDS Place Matters report: 19120, 19121, 19122, 19124, 19132, 19133, 19134, 19139, 19140, 19142.
New Services	Organizations with a strong track record of experience implementing MBH services for families with children within the prenatal-8 year old age range may apply to implement programs or services that have established evidence of effectiveness, even if the organization has not implemented that program/service in the past. Organizations implementing services that are new to them must provide a clear and feasible plan to implement the work that includes a solid justification for anticipated outcomes.

Learning and Insights

Grantees will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the year.

In addition, organizations funded through this RFP will be convened in a Learning Community to build networks among those advancing a common objective, to share learning and best practices, and to identify ways in which progress could be enhanced. Grantees will help to determine the frequency, content, and specific goals of the Learning Community. The overhead funding included with any awarded grants is, in part, meant to help subsidize staff participation in the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an optional informational webinar on **September 16, 2025 at 3:00PM ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/williampennfoundation>

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding and may include up to three months for planning. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of an organization's operating budget.

All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, community engagement, staffing, and implementation, are eligible for funding.

In rare cases, it is possible that *everything* an organization does is focused on advancing the specific objective stated above. If that is the case, an organization may be eligible for general operating, rather than project support. If you believe that to be the case, please contact the Program Officer named below to discuss further.

Application Process

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions in the eligibility section above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>.

Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **October 23, 2025**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Selected organizations will take part in a site visit with WPF staff so that the Foundation can learn more about applicants’ work. Site visits will be approximately two hours in duration. We ask that organizations use this time to introduce key staff working on the proposed project, to show WPF staff where the work will take place, and to elevate the voices of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed project. Based on a combination of the written materials and the learning from the site visit, **a final slate of organizations** will be recommended to the WPF Board for consideration of their proposals.

This request or any subsequent response does not commit William Penn Foundation or the responding organization to any future funding or engagement. If you have any questions, contact Kellie Brown at kbrown@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

September 10, 2025

Proposal submission period opens.

September 16, 2025

Informational Webinar (see page 9)

October 23, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

November 7-10, 2025

Select applicants notified that their proposals have been chosen for further consideration and a site visit. Other applicants will be notified that their proposals are not advancing in the process.

November 10-December 10, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

February 6, 2026

WPF Board review selected proposals.

February 9, 2026

Project implementation can begin.