

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Improving the Health of Children through Childcare Service Expansion in Mercer County

Release Date: June 3, 2024
LOI Deadline: July 12, 2024

The Buhl Regional Health Foundation (BRHF) is a private health foundation, committed to making a positive impact on the health and well-being of the community we serve through education, grants, scholarships and collaborative partnerships with local organizations. Our mission to identify and address the diverse health care needs of the community gives us the unique opportunity to invest in your innovative solutions.

BRHF envisions a healthy community where people are active participants in driving their physical and mental health and the health of the community. Additionally, we are concerned about the Mercer County youth and we want to hear from them and learn what they feel their needs are.

OVERVIEW

According to statistics from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health rankings and Roadmaps, in Mercer County, there are only 4 childcare centers for every 1,000 children under the age of 5. The average across the state of PA is 5, and the federal average is 7. Mercer County's shortcomings in childcare not only affect the health of Mercer County's youth but create barriers for parents who would like to work but cannot either afford childcare or find childcare that is open during the hours of their employment. In addition, many of the childcare facilities in Mercer County have waiting lists for enrollment. Children, age 18 and under, make up about 19.5% of our county's population, with approximately 14,500 children being of the age (12 years) to need childcare, either early childhood education or before and/or after school care.

Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care's Dr. Lauren Birchfield Kennedy believes that core to setting young children up to thrive is ensuring that they experience high-quality early learning environments, opportunities, and programs. Participation in early education programs is key to fostering children's healthy cognitive and socioemotional development—and research shows us that children who participate in these programs have better education, earnings, and health outcomes as compared to those who do not. Truly, one of the best investments we can make to improve health equity is ensuring that all children have access to an early education and before and after school care that is supportive.

It is also one of the best investments we can make in ensuring one particularly valuable human asset: resiliency.

Dr. Kennedy's research indicates that exposure to stress or trauma during the early years of life can have negative impacts on children's brain development and health outcomes. It's clear now more than ever that parents and children are experiencing substantial stress. Stressors are compounded for families of color who already were navigating institutional racism and whose communities shoulder significant health, education, and other disparities.

Key to counteracting exposure to stress and trauma is resiliency. Research shows that early education programs and supportive before and after school care helps build resilient children.

A child's participation in early education programs can serve as a buffer to the negative impact that stress can have on the developing mind and body. High-quality early learning settings promote positive developmental outcomes—and, for more vulnerable children, can stand as oases of stability, predictability, and support. Nurturing teachers and relationships with peers complement the role of parents and caregivers in helping children build strong social, emotional, and executive function skills. Investment in resiliency is an investment in health equity—both in the immediate and over the long-term.

In Mercer County, according to 2022 – 2023 RWJF County Health Rankings and Roadmaps data, the childcare cost burden is much higher than the state or national average. In Mercer County, the average household spent 41% of its income on childcare for two children. The state household average is 31% and the national average is only 27%. Buhl Regional Health Foundation realizes there is a lot of work to do surrounding childcare in Mercer County. Multiple community partners have approached us over the past several months, notifying us of the need for expansion of capacity for childcare. A recent community partner informed us of the upcoming closure of a facility that cared for several classrooms of children, with no intention to open a new facility to fill the void. To ensure the health of the youth growing up in Mercer County, BRHF recognizes the need for an expansion of childcare services in our community and would like to do a small part in supporting that effort. We are devoting up to \$75,000 of our grants budget to this initiative in 2024 and anticipating the potential to fund multiple grantees.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

BRHF will award grants in September 2024 for implementation of initiatives that strive to increase Mercer County's capacity for affordable childcare, thereby providing access to quality early education to the County's youth. BRHF believes that healthy youth are connected to and helping to drive the health of their community. We desire to fund programming that ensures our youth are given the tools they need to grow up healthy.

USE OF FUNDS

Organizations are invited to apply for funding to expand daycares in Mercer County, either by an extension of their hours of operation or otherwise increasing capacity through staffing or renovation of space. Proposals that are collaborative in nature are preferred.

If awarded, funding must be exhausted within a one-year grant period from the date funds were received; BRHF does not award multi-year grants

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

To qualify as a grant recipient, your organization's initiative must meet the following requirements:

- Initiative may not be for planning or permitting to build a new facility.
- Initiative must provide daycare services for families in Mercer County.
- Initiative's goals must be clearly identified and methods for measurement of goals and objectives should be clearly described.

- Initiative should include a plan for collaborating across sectors in our community and/or establishing strong community partnerships.

GRANT PRIORITIES

The recipient(s) of the grant will:

- Demonstrate creativity and innovation in the community.
- Predominantly serve Mercer County youth and families.
- Be encouraged to actively develop strong, cross-sector community partnerships.
- Have a clear plan for sustainability beyond the grant period.
- Have plans and permits in place and be shovel ready with new facilities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible applicants will meet the following criteria:

- Applicants must be classified as tax-exempt by the IRS, typically 501(c)(3) status, government agency or utilizing a fiscal agent who is clearly identified in the application.
- Faith-based organizations must welcome all faiths and participation in religious activity participation must be clearly defined as optional.
- Applicant's efforts must largely serve youth and families who reside in Mercer County, PA.
- Previous grantees of BRHF must have fulfilled the required 18 month waiting period from their last grant award and all previous grants must be closed (all grant reporting completed and any unused funds returned).
- Preference will be given to applications:
 - collaborative in nature.
 - that expand current operating hours into the evening or night.
 - that increase capacity of current space.

UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES

This grant may not be used to fund the following:

- Supplemental funding to previously awarded grants
- Planning or permitting
- Direct payment to a pediatric care provider
- Research projects, such as clinical trials
- Health fairs or other one-time events
- Consumables and daily supplies including: t-shirts, clothing, giveaways, prizes, snacks, cosmetics and beauty supplies
- No reimbursements for items purchased prior to the grant period
- Sponsorships of events
- Sports team equipment
- Field trips
- Addiction treatment
- Mental health treatment
- Additional expenses may be disallowed at the discretion of BRHF

APPLICATION PROCESS

Responses to this RFP must be submitted through BRHF's grant portal. All other forms of submission will not be reviewed. First-time applicants will need to create a new account. Once an account is established, the Letter of Interest can be completed within the portal and must be submitted by the deadline listed in this RFP.

A review of the LOI's received will prompt BRHF to issue invitations for detailed proposals. All applicants will be notified of the status of their LOI, either via invitation to continue the application process or a letter of ineligibility.

Detailed proposals will require the upload of the organization's most recent 990, a full project budget, proposed use of the funding requested and additional details and documentation regarding your organization and proposed initiative.

Additional attachments to the application are optional, not scored, and may not be used in response to application questions. Applicants may include up to four pages of attachments, including, but not limited to: citations/references, flyers, letters of support and letters of intent or interest from current or future community partners.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Detailed proposals will be scored based on the following criteria:

- Creativity and innovation
- Significance of impact on the community's health needs
- Effective collaboration efforts or goals
- Actionability

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipients will be required to submit reports on project development and implementation on an interim and final reporting schedule determined by the BRHF Director of Grantmaking.

RFP TIMELINE

The RFP Cycle will follow the timeline below:

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| Deadline for LOI | July 12, 2024 |
| Detailed Proposal Invitations Sent | July 17, 2024 |
| Deadline for Detailed Proposal | August 16, 2024 |
| Award Announcements | September 16, 2024 |
| Funding Issued | September 30, 2024 |

QUESTIONS

The Buhl Regional Health Foundation staff is here to be a resource throughout the application process. Questions, requests for guidance, and portal support needs should be directed to Kimberly Porsch, Director of Grantmaking, kimberly@buhlrhf.org or Jessica Koss, Executive Team Assistant, jessica@buhlrhf.org.