



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
FFY 2021 CMHS Block Grant Testimony
Appropriations, Public Health
& Human Services Committees
September 21, 2020



Good morning distinguished members of the Appropriations, Public Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Michael Williams and I am the Deputy Commissioner of Operations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). I am joined this morning by JoShonda Guerrier, Administrator, Clinical and Community Services, and Tim Marshall, Director of Community Mental Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's proposed Federal Fiscal Year 2021 Allocation Plan for the children's portion of the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant. The Department proposes to use the funds from this Block Grant to further our vision for a comprehensive community-based mental health service system for children and their families. These federal dollars play a critical role in meeting the Department's behavioral health mandate and for strengthening the mental health system in Connecticut, resulting in positive outcomes and allowing children to realize their fullest potential.

The services and supports provided with Block Grant funding are important components of the foundational elements that DCF has embraced through the System of Care model, which aims to maintain children with mental health issues or challenges in their homes and communities through both the efforts of local consortiums and the Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership. In collaboration with community providers, state agencies and families, the Department is working to ensure that children and their families receive the care and services that they need.

Similar to years past, the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant continues to provide services that are not funded by Medicaid or other sources, including access to local, community-based family supports and resources to enhance the quality of existing community-based services. In this way, Block Grant dollars are "blended" with other state and federal resources to increase their impact and improve outcomes. This improved impact includes diverting some children from the juvenile justice system by creating an integrated, comprehensive behavioral health system for all of Connecticut's children and youth.

DCF proposes to dedicate \$2,796,453 from the FFY 2021 Block Grant, supplemented by prior year carryover funds, to the following prioritized services in response to the President's proposed budget.

The following **multi-year initiatives** are proposed to be funded at the same or slightly reduced level as approved in last year's allocation plan:

- Respite Care for Families, funded at \$450,000
- FAVOR, funded at \$720,000
- Youth Suicide Prevention, funded at \$225,000
- CT Community KidCare: Workforce Development, Training and Culturally Competent Care, funded at \$65,000
- Extended Day Treatment: Model Development and Training, funded at \$40,000

- Early Serious Mental Illness/First Episode Psychosis, funded at \$423,453
- Outpatient Care: System and Treatment Improvement, funded at \$183,000
- Best Practice and Promotion, funded at \$230,000
- Workforce Development: Higher Education In-Home Curriculum Project, funded at \$65,000

Outcomes: Performance Improvement and Data Dashboard Development (\$50,000)

Funding is proposed to be decreased by \$150,000 as compared to last year's approved allocation. The proposed decrease is a result of the Department only supporting general maintenance and required SAMHSA data improvements in the Provider Information Exchange (PIE) behavioral health data system. The proposed allocation will allow for the continuation of required data reporting, data enhancements that are required to meet federal outcome measures, ongoing support for the collection of expanded federal outcome measures, and further development of automated reporting.

Other Connecticut Community KidCare: (\$45,000)

Funding is proposed to be decreased by \$20,000 as compared to FFY 2020 since last year's allocation was underspent. This funding continues to support oral and written translation services and training opportunities for families and providers. Additionally, DCF supports training sessions for providers and families related to trauma and behavioral health support in the event of local disasters. Community collaboratives and regional suicide advisory boards will continue to be eligible to receive minimal stipends for the support of community meetings

Emergency Crisis (\$300,000)

This funding will be utilized to maintain the costs associated with the increased call volume to the statewide Mobile Crisis and Suicide Prevention Call Center. The proposed funding decrease of \$75,000 is made possible because several competing priorities prevented last year's approved allocation to be fully executed.

In closing, congruent with the federal mandate to “transform” the state’s mental health system and create a comprehensive system of care, these funds are incorporated into the Department’s overarching strategy and vision for a broad array of quality, accountable, family-centered, racially just, culturally competent, and trauma-informed services for children with complex behavioral health needs. The services and activities funded through the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant are integral to DCF’s ongoing efforts to reduce reliance on congregate care and enhance the continuum of services available to children and their families.

The Department thanks the General Assembly for its vision for behavioral health care in Connecticut, and its continued support to DCF in implementing its mental health mandate for all of CT’s children.