

Washington Non-Profits: Federal COVID Relief

Children and Youth Addendum

Ensuring children and youth are supported both through the COVID crisis and the recovery will be crucial to our country's ability to gain lost ground on many fronts. Maintaining infrastructure for education, health, and safety of young people will not only determine outcomes and opportunities later in life but will also have impacts on parents' ability to work, community safety, and family stability.

Child and youth serving non-profits would like to thank you for the bold moves being taken by the federal government to stabilize the economy and assist in combating COVID-19. While our educational institutions play a key role in supporting children, there is a host of programming, resources, and systems that wrap-around students to keep kids engaged, on-track, and in some cases, provide critical basic needs – that if goes out of existence – will exacerbate the current economic crisis before our country. Additionally, when parents reenter the workplace, these supports allow them to work and sustain their family income and greatly decrease reliance on public assistance.

Current Challenges

For the rest of 2020, these services are essential to provide summer learning and child care at a time when learning is particularly limited, provide access for kids and families to meals and basic needs, and will engage youth, which will be especially important given the additional stress placed on families and lack of work and internship opportunities for older teens who may find engagement and money through dangerous and unhealthy mechanisms. Youth development is critical for youth furthest from opportunity especially those that are in foster or kinship care, or homeless. Youth and adults alike can be gravely impacted by isolation. A calm and encouraging voice can be incredibly reassuring for any child living with uncertainty.

Community-based organizations are facing dire choices given an unanticipated and sharp decline in funding and revenues. Any non-profit with a fee-for-service model (such as child care) or through sales of an item (such as sales of Girl Scout cookies) are seeing drastically reduced incomes and in some cases, zero income from those funding mechanisms. Some public agencies are pausing or eliminating contracts with providers, with potentially more on the way as local and state revenues face dramatic declines.

Federal support throughout this year will be critical to ensure that programs run by organizations such as the Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Communities In Schools, youth and family Dispute Resolution and more are able to serve youth and sustain critical infrastructure to support young people. Small, single site organizations, particularly those that are culturally-based such as the Asian Counseling and Referral Services or East African Community Services, may be forced to reduce or eliminate programming and services. In these uncertain times, it is difficult for volunteer-based nonprofits to amass the private donations and volunteers that make our life-changing work possible. Schools were not created to support all child needs and the constellation of supports is facing its greatest challenge to date.

Solutions and Federal Policy Requests

To continue to sustain the non-profits working with children and youth, below are potential funding mechanisms and requirements attached to funding structures that would support children and providers:

- I. Securing a flexible funding stream directly for community-based organizations to support children and families. This could run through a state agency such as the Department of Commerce to support child academic and social-emotional education and other basic needs outside of the classroom.
- II. Any additional federal funds to public entities, including state departments of education and state agencies that oversee child care, human services, and child welfare must demonstrate financial and other partnerships with community-based providers, and allow for modifications to existing contracts to amend current work in order to meet current demand and the organization's ability to provide resources during times of social isolation.
- III. Require all new federal funding channels to demonstrate that funds are prioritized for populations of children and youth furthest from opportunity and who experience higher levels of violence and trauma, such as foster youth, homeless youth, justice-involved youth, and children of color.
- IV. Provide a funding stream and/or allow other funding streams to support the technological needs of our youth and their providers. The fund(s) could support phone and internet bills; purchasing of computers that could be housed at a non-profit and/or lent out (esp. for homeless youth) for academic learning, virtual therapeutic activities, and job search activities. This is particularly important for youth in the foster care system and youth experiencing homelessness.
- V. Increased funding for youth workforce initiatives. In a depressed economy, job opportunities are especially challenging for teenagers, and homeless teenagers in particular. Without access to financial resources, teens and young adults need access to quality workforce programs to ensure they have access to financial opportunities, now and in the future, to support themselves and their families.

We greatly appreciate the support in previous COVID relief packages. These decisions are not easy and there are needs across every industry and age group. Children and youth and the programming and engagement they receive now will pay dividends as we stand up the economic and education systems.

By supporting non-profits serving our children and youth we can keep Washington working, keep kids learning, and keep kids safe.

Questions:

David Beard: dbeard@schoolsoutwashington.org

Rene Murry: rmurry@ydekc.org

Jeannie Nist: jeannie@ciswa.org