

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Office of Health Equity is committed to promoting a culture of inclusion where Wisconsinites from all racial and ethnic identities; ages; nationalities; social and economic status; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; geographical location; religious; political, or ideological perspective; and physical and mental abilities are able to live their best life. DHS protects and promotes the health and safety of all Wisconsinites by identifying, dismantling, and improving institutional structures that inflict and ignore racism, discrimination, and trauma among marginalized communities and centering our work around our core values.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program is dedicated to upholding the Department's mission of racial health equity to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in our Part C early intervention services. DHS facilitated local child find efforts through its statewide First 1,000 Days Wisconsin Child Find Campaign in FFY2021 to increase knowledge on the Birth to 3 Program, understand how early intervention can help, and opportunities to access the program for eligible infants and toddlers. Statewide dissemination of the First 1,000 Days materials amongst families and health and child care professionals was expected to result in more infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities accessing resources and services at an earlier age. The First 1,000 Days Wisconsin Child Find Campaign media toolkit and materials are translated into English, Spanish, and Hmong to accommodate for the diverse populations participating Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program.

In FFY2022, DHS analyzed the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program's current policies and practices to IDEA Part C federal regulations. The comprehensive gap analysis provided insight into program improvement opportunities, one of which being increasing referrals for children in historically underrepresented populations to ensure all eligible infants and toddlers are receiving Birth to 3 Program services. As a result, the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program created a series of Child Find Outreach Resources to aid local programs in their outreach efforts to identify all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities earlier and increase referrals to the Birth to 3 Program. DHS published a "Comprehensive Child Find Checklist" as a tool to aid county Birth to 3 Programs in the establishment of a comprehensive child find system at a local level. DHS also published outreach resources for specific populations to promote equitable access and participation in Birth to 3 Program services. DHS solicited stakeholder input from the ICC, external subject matter experts, and RESource's Research to Practice team on the validity and cultural appropriateness of materials prior to publication. DHS published and promoted the Child Find Outreach Resources to continue efforts towards racial health equity.

Additionally, DHS undertook initiatives to address the disparities in our indicator 3, child outcomes data, to promote health equity in the Birth to 3 Program. In FFY2021, the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program allocated a portion of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to implement the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot. The IECMHC Pilot focused on improving social-emotional development of children in the Birth to 3 Program and promoted racial health equity in access and outcomes through culturally sensitive and responsive services. DHS plans to analyze the pre- and post-surveys of all pilot participants to assess provider competency and confidence in addressing social and emotional needs of children and families and overall impact to advocate for policy initiatives and funding to drive sustainability efforts. (Additional information about the ARPA-funded projects are available in our Annual Performance Report, Section B of the Phase III, Year 8 SSIP).

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

DHS identified that child find for children birth to one-years-old has remained below the state target, especially for targeted populations. DHS recognizes the opportunity to continually improve upon referrals and enrollment for children birth to one-years-old. DHS is committed to assisting local programs in identifying children earlier to the Birth to 3 Program through the First 1,000 Days Child Find Campaign and the Child Find Outreach Resources (as explained above). A barrier that may impede on equitable participation is monitoring the impact of these new targeted resources and subsequent enrollment. DHS understands that the creation of resources does not guarantee operational change to program practices.

Additionally, DHS received feedback from families participating in the APRA Infant Mental Health Consultation Pilot requesting more diversity within the early intervention workforce in addition to providing culturally responsive and competency trainings to providers.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

In May of each year, the Circles of Life Annual Conference is held for families with children with disabilities and providers and other professionals who support them. The conference is an opportunity for state staff to hear from diverse families and listen to their experiences in Wisconsin's children's disability programs. DHS plans to solicit feedback from families on how to promote equitable access and participation in all children's disability programs, including Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program.

DHS plans to inform county Birth to 3 Programs of the child find federal regulations, program expectations, and published resources through bi-monthly teleconferences and government delivery messages to increase early referrals and enrollment of eligible infants and toddlers to the Birth to 3 Program. DHS will encourage the dissemination and utilization of child find resources at a local level for operational impact and equitable access to early intervention services.

DHS plans to address the concerns regarding diversity within the early intervention workforce in our FFY2024 Part C Grant application. DHS has made a concerted effort to promote a diverse workforce knowledgeable of culturally responsive practices and allocated funds specific to workforce recruitment and retention initiatives. In FFY2022, DHS' contracted vendor, RESource, launched Wisconsin's professional development system, "EI in WI", to provide comprehensive

training and implementation of evidence-based practices to strengthen Wisconsin's early intervention workforce. In the FFY2024 Part C Grant Application, BCS allocated a portion of the grant to CESA-5's RESource team to continue their existing professional development initiatives. Within the comprehensive early intervention system, "EI in WI", RESource will develop learning tracks for the early intervention workforce with emphasis on family engagement and culturally responsive practices to improve experiences for families participating in the Birth to 3 Program. The increased knowledge of culturally responsive practices will help county Birth to 3 Programs appropriately engage with diverse families and build trusting relationships for families to safely communicate their needs. RESource also plans to partner with higher education institutions throughout Wisconsin to promote early intervention careers and recruit a more diverse applicant pool.

DHS plans to request information from county Birth to 3 Program on existing family engagement practices and identify opportunities for support. DHS will plan to conduct an Operational Impact Discussion (OID) focusing on family engagement practices and polling counties in a Birth to 3 Program teleconference. In doing so, DHS will have a better understanding of the current landscape for how programs engage families and disseminate child find materials. DHS will analyze the results to determine effective strategies to improve upon diverse family engagement.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

RESource anticipates the release of their learning tracks on family engagement and culturally responsive practices by summer 2024. RESource will attend higher education institutions throughout 2024 to promote early intervention careers and continue recruitment efforts. DHS will engage in regular meetings with RESource to assess workforce recruitment and retention efforts and determine additional actions to achieve a more diverse workforce. DHS plans to organize an Operational Impact Discussion (OID) with county Birth to 3 Programs in mid-2024 to address family engagement practices. DHS will continue to analyze the state's Indicator 5 data for improvements in early identification and referrals for children birth to one-years-old to the Birth to 3 Program. Additionally, DHS will provide education on child find regulations, program expectations, and resources in the March and June 2024 teleconferences.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.