



## FOCUS AREA: HEALTHY BEGINNINGS RESPONSIVE GRANTMAKING

Brain development is most rapid in the first three years of life and early experiences have significant impact on long-term development. We know that early childhood occurs in the context of family, community and social systems. We believe that all caregivers need support and deserve equitable access to resources that nurture the healthy development of their children. Mental health supports all aspects of development and is essential for infant, child and caregiver well-being – it is the foundation of our investments in healthy beginnings.

### HEALTHY BEGINNING - STRATEGIES

The Healthy Beginnings Focus Area seeks to ensure the needs of infants, young children and their caregivers are met through coordinated services that focus on their full environment of relationships. We prioritize the integration of infant, child and maternal mental health into programs serving families because it can profoundly impact child development. In the Healthy Beginnings Focus Area, we will support three responsive grantmaking strategies:

- **Enhancing Perinatal and Pediatric Health Care**
- **Strengthening Support During Pregnancy and Early Parenting**
- **Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation**

#### Enhancing Perinatal and Pediatric Health Care

We want to support health care settings that address the many complex factors that affect infant, child and family well-being. Mental and behavioral health conditions, unmet oral health needs, intimate partner violence and child developmental concerns are a few potential health challenges facing young children 0-5 and their caregivers.

Systems are not structured to serve all families equitably and access to care is more challenging in some regions of our state. We prioritize practices that serve children and caregivers experiencing the highest barriers to health and well-being.

We seek to fund:

**Integrated Perinatal and Pediatric Care:** Integrated health in obstetric, pediatric and family care settings that promote accessibility to critical services and seek to enhance and strengthen team-based care to address the needs of whole families through professional training and coaching.

**Screening and Referral with Community Connection:** Integrated health settings seeking to implement or further develop screening and referral processes in partnership with community providers in order to identify risks and increase protective factors for children and families.

**Group-Based Care and Education:** Health care settings offering programming to increase caregiver capacity by providing education and group-based services, such as group prenatal care and other perinatal supports.

### Strengthening Support During Pregnancy and Early Parenting

Maternal well-being during and following pregnancy is important for the mother, the child and their relationship. Several complex, interrelated factors contribute to the health of a pregnancy and to the circumstances following a child's arrival. We want to ensure that expecting and new parents have the healthy supports they need to be well and to promote positive development for their children.

We direct our resources toward pregnant and parenting people that experience the greatest challenges to well-being and prioritize programming that is culturally responsive and celebrates the diverse makeup of families.

We seek to fund:

**Peer Support and Social Connection:** Programs that provide connection and support during pregnancy, birth and following the recent arrival of a child such as peer or parenting groups, social networks, doulas, and other relationship- and community-building supports.

**Local and Community-Driven Efforts:** Emerging practices that are focused on meeting local and community needs, particularly for parents facing higher levels of isolation due to cultural or systemic barriers.

**Home Visiting:** Effective home visitation programs that are designed to meet the needs of parents with children under five years of age and promote health, safety and nurturing parent-child relationships.

### Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Early childhood programs are often helping children and families that have experienced or are experiencing trauma, presenting significant challenges for early childhood professionals. We value early childhood mental health consultation (ECMH) as an important approach to supporting caregivers and professionals and to building the capacity of the early childhood system. By advancing mental health knowledge and providing reflective supervision, consultants help children, families and professionals to thrive.

We center equity in our decision-making and believe mental health consultation needs to be culturally responsive and reduce inequities. We direct our resources toward early childhood programs serving families experiencing trauma and the greatest challenges to health and well-being.

We seek to fund:

**ECMH Consultation for Early Care and Home Visitors:** Infant and early childhood mental health consultation in early care settings, including centers, family, friend and neighbor networks, and home visitation programs. We prioritize consultants working across regions and settings.

**Reflective Supervision for Early Childhood Professionals:** Reflective supervision for home visitors, family advocates and other professionals working in settings serving children and families.

**High-Quality Implementation of Social and Emotional Supports:** Implementation of programming or curricula aimed at bolstering social and emotional development in organizations or settings receiving ECMH consultation services.