



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 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**

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 that can be identified in integrated care settings.

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 families experiencing the highest barriers to health and well-being.

We seek to fund:

Integrated Perinatal and Pediatric Care: Integrated health care 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.

Screening and Referral with Community Connection: Integrated health settings seeking to implement or further develop screening and referral processes in partnership with community providers 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

Many factors contribute to the health of a pregnancy and to the parent-child relationship. Education and social connection for expecting parents and parents of young children can help in promoting family well-being, responsive parenting, and positive child development.

We want to ensure that expecting and new parents have the supports they need to be well and to promote positive development for their children. We direct our resources toward pregnant and parenting people who 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:

Social Connection and Parenting Education: Programs that provide connection and support during pregnancy, birth and following the arrival of a child such as peer groups, social networks, doulas and parenting classes.

Home Visitation: Home visitation programs that are designed to meet the needs of parents and to promote health, safety and nurturing parent-child relationships.

Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Relationships with early caregivers are a critical element of positive child development. By building the mental health knowledge and skills of early childhood professionals and caregivers, we can promote the healthy social and emotional development of young children.

We know that most young children are cared for in home-based settings and that providers of all types have limited access to resources to focus on social and emotional learning. We prioritize community-based organizations demonstrating a strong commitment to equity. We direct our resources toward requests to support family, friend, and neighbor settings, family childcare homes and centers reaching a majority children of color and those with limited access to care.

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.

Supporting Positive Social and Emotional Development: Building the capacity of early childhood caregivers, with an emphasis on home-based care, to nurture healthy social and emotional development. Requests from community partners with strong connections to home-based providers are encouraged.