

# **Cuyahoga County Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Funders Task Force**

## **Request for Proposal – Project Director: Strengthening the IECMH Workforce**

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The Funders Task Force for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health is seeking a consultant to act as Project Director for a unique, three-year commitment implementing a plan to expand and strengthen availability of IECMH services to 0-5 year-olds in Cuyahoga County.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health**

In Cuyahoga County, between 6,531 and 12,311 children ages 0-5 are in need of infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) services annually. IECMH is a type of mental health service that works with children ages 0-5 and their families/ caregivers, to help develop a child's capacity to 1) experience, manage, and express a full range of positive and negative emotions; 2) develop close, satisfying relationships with others; and 3) actively explore environments and learn. Aside from in utero, the first few years of a child's life are the most critical for brain development. Because the brain is so malleable during early childhood exposure to trauma and stress in early years can leave a lasting impact.

While the demand for behavioral health services outstrips the capacity of behavioral health professionals in the County for nearly every client population segment, the situation is particularly dire for IECMH. Children have been on a waiting list for IECMH services every year since 2014, and as of 2023, 138 children ages 0-5 were on the waitlist. Children and families needing IECMH services today are identified and referred for services through a number of channels. Referring entities include (but are not limited to): clinical healthcare providers; community agencies where families are receiving complementary services; the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, etc.

Because Medicaid and insurance plans do not typically reimburse for IECMH services, Cuyahoga County's Office of Early Childhood, Invest in Children, works in coordination with the Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board to contract with a network of community-based behavioral health agencies to provide IECMH services and reimburses these agencies with County funds on a fee-for-service basis. Agencies report that the true cost to deliver these services exceeds what is reimbursable and often approach private philanthropy for grant funding to cover the shortfall.

#### **The Cuyahoga County Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Funders Task Force**

In 2023 the Cuyahoga County IECMH Funders Task Force came together to identify ways to expand and strengthen the availability of early childhood mental health service in Cuyahoga County. It hired Kirtland Consulting, supported by Kadima Consulting and New Growth Group, to identify a comprehensive range of options that public and private funders could collectively

pursue to alleviate the constraint of insufficient capacity to meet the need for IECMH services in the County.

The report identified five strategies to expand and strengthen the IECMH workforce:

1. Increase awareness of the IECMH field
2. Support paid internships
3. Develop career pathways from non-licensed to licensed practitioners
4. Medicaid recognition of the DC:0-5
5. Join the Alliance for Advancement of Infant Mental Health

Kirtland Consulting's report included an implementation plan for each strategy. An attachment with strategy details is included with this RFP. **The Project Director will use that implementation plan as a blueprint for their work, but the process will be an iterative one that evolves as needed.**

The IECMH Funders Task Force has a leadership team that directs this work, and Task Force member, Invest in Children, will oversee the implementation of the plan with the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio acting as the fiscal manager.

#### **SCOPE OF WORK/ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**The Project Director is responsible for managing and coordinating all efforts to implement the IECMH plan strategies.** The Project Director will report to Invest in Children (IIC) and work closely with IIC and the IECMH Leadership Team.

Essential to this role is clear and consistent communication, effective coordination of various workstreams and stakeholders, and demonstration of progress made. Candidates for the Project Director role are not limited to those that reside in Northeast Ohio, but any candidate from outside the local geographic area that responds must demonstrate knowledge/understanding of the local behavioral health landscape to be considered. Ideal candidates will be systems-level thinkers skilled in detailed project coordination.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Meet with IECMH Strategy Advisor over the first 60 days of employment to get up-to-speed with project learnings.
- Work with IIC & IECMH Leadership Team to identify and secure funding for implementation of the plan.
- Identify partners to lead or "own" activities and/or strategies in the implementation plan.
- Work with IIC, Leadership Team, and implementation partners to identify and onboard consultants.
- Establish cadence of meetings/convenings with: IIC; IECMH Leadership Team; consultants and implementation partners; larger IECMH Workforce Funders Task Force; and any additional groups that may be formed over the course of plan implementation.

- Coordinate the work of implementation partners and consultants to ensure collaboration when needed, minimal duplication, and timely progress on strategies and plan timeline.
- Establish relationships with key contacts in higher education and behavioral health agencies to initiate activities around building awareness, educational and training opportunities, and career pathways; determine need for additional consultant engagement.
- Support advocacy to the state and relationships with state partners.
- Coordinate with other behavioral health initiatives at the state and local level.
- Manage project timeline, adjusting as needed.
- Develop metrics and track progress on both processes and outcomes of plan implementation.
- Work with IIC on reporting plan progress to implementation partners, funders, and other stakeholders.
- Advise IIC and Leadership Team on what additional resources are needed to carry out the implementation plan, provide timeline for needs, and help identify resources.

## **PROPOSAL, SUBMISSION AND DEADLINES**

A complete proposal should address the following:

- A statement of consultant experience and qualifications
- Who will be involved in providing consulting services and their scope of involvement and experience if not specified above
- Familiarity with behavioral health/IECMH as a field and in Ohio and Cuyahoga County specifically
- A clear and accurate cost proposal
  - The Task Force anticipates that this engagement will require a significant time commitment, especially as the infrastructure of the strategic implementation is being developed. However, the Project Director's workload will vary and is highly dependent upon the speed at which each strategy advances. Knowing this, the Task Force asks that you develop a cost proposal to the best of your abilities. As the implementation plan (attached) reflects, the project will be executed over a period of three years. Please provide a cost estimate for the first six months, with estimated ranges for each of the subsequent six-month periods over the three-year project timeline.
- Contact information for three past clients

Complete proposals should be submitted on or before **Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm**, by email to Jennifer Dodd at Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio at [jennifer.dodd@escneo.org](mailto:jennifer.dodd@escneo.org).

Candidates to be interviewed will be notified in the weeks following the submission deadline. Work will begin when a final decision is reached by the Task Force, anticipated by mid to late June.

You may contact Delaney Jones with questions concerning this RFP at [delaney.jones@escneo.org](mailto:delaney.jones@escneo.org)

*The IECMH Funders Task Force consists of representatives from organizations that include: the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board, the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children, the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio, and the Bruening, Cleveland, Deaconess, Gund, Mt. Sinai Health, and Woodruff foundations.*

# 5 STRATEGIES TO EXPAND & STRENGTHEN THE IECMH WORKFORCE

- ❖ Increase Awareness of the Field
- ❖ Support Paid Internships
- ❖ Develop Career Pathways from Non-Licensed to Licensed
- ❖ Medicaid Recognition of DC:0-5 : Passage & Funding
- ❖ Join The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health



# INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE FIELD

## We will:

- ❖ Create IECMH brand w/ consistent language to help any ambassador spread awareness
- ❖ Create a consultant-like position(s) that could work with all colleges to support them through development of the proper courses/certificate programs
- ❖ Create opportunities for more specialized education/training for undergraduate or paraprofessionals through courses or certifications, such as lunch and learns with guest lectures

## Success Indicators:

- ❖ Availability and accessibility/expansion of certifications
- ❖ Meet with [X] number of students to expose to IECMH field
- ❖ Job description for consultant
- ❖ Case studies for ambassadors to share with public

## This will result in:

- ❖ Attainment of certifications
- ❖ Increased student selection of IECMH specific track
- ❖ State policy consideration with resources dedicated to IECMH
- ❖ Decreased time for services

# SUPPORT PAID INTERNSHIPS

## We will:

- ❖ Maximize Ohio's Great Minds Fellowship opportunity. Connect agencies and universities to improve internship relationships and get more students exposed to the field. Identify strategies for after GMF expires in March 2025
- ❖ Fund internship supervisors to compensate for billable hours
- ❖ Over the long run, create consistency between university internships and remove the \$ cap

## Success Indicators:

- ❖ Conversion of interns into FTEs in field at same employer
- ❖ Internships with racial and gender diversity

## This will result in:

- ❖ More internships available and filled
- ❖ More people entering the field

# DEVELOP CAREER PATHWAYS FROM NON-LICENSED TO LICENSED

## We will:

- ❖ Explore how the new Dept of Children and Youth can be a stepping stone to creating consistency throughout the state
- ❖ Join The Alliance, and partner with the State of Ohio to leverage the existing body of content regarding competencies, education and pathways
- ❖ Improve and revamp trainings for current clinicians in the IECMH field
- ❖ Fund program to educate employers and create connectivity to mental health pathways
- ❖ Wage Progression

## Success Indicators:

- ❖ More entry points to the career
- ❖ Increase in [XYZ] credential and leveling

## This will result in:

- ❖ More people of color providers in this space and every level of care



# MEDICAID RECOGNITION OF DC:0-5 PASSAGE & FUNDING

## **We will:**

- ❖ Fund advocacy to support the passage of House Bill 7 and/ or other relevant legislation
- ❖ Fund new advocacy efforts to identify funding sources and educate practitioners about billing policy
- ❖ Participate in the Zero To Three Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Financing Policy Project
- ❖ Technical consultation on ODM implementation

## **Success Indicators:**

- ❖ Hire an advocacy consultant. Find out what it really will take to turn codes on
- ❖ Develop strategies (e.g., pilot in Cuyahoga County using 1115 waiver; partner with MCOs to cover costs that Medicaid doesn't; reference state increase of DD and MH entry wages to \$17)
- ❖ Movement with ODM with approval of HB7

## **This will result in:**

- ❖ Unlock reimbursement for providers – value depends on billing capacity, rates, workforce pipeline, etc.



# JOIN THE ALLIANCE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

## We will:

- ❖ Fund an Endorsement Coordinator position at AIMHiOhio, who will partner with regions and state including NEO to roll-out the program
- ❖ Partially fund competency licensing
- ❖ Partner with the state of Ohio Department of Children and Families
- ❖ Pilot a scholarship to apply for the endorsement

## Success Indicators:

- ❖ Figure out the jigsaw puzzle of how Endorsement could coexist with Ohio credential ( especially for treatment)
- ❖ Gain Support from DCF
- ❖ Kickoff with Governor & Mrs. DeWine

## This will result in:

- ❖ Adoption/endorsement of the model by state
- ❖ Adoption of the model in Cuyahoga County only, if no state buy-in

