



Legislation Text

File #: 24-1351, **Version:** 1

Department: Economic Equity and Opportunity
Department Head/Elected Official: Estella Gonzalez

Regular or Supplemental RCA: Regular RCA
Type of Request: Interlocal Agreement

Project ID (if applicable): ARPA_RISE
Vendor/Entity Legal Name (if applicable): The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD

MWDBE Contracted Goal (if applicable): N/A
MWDBE Current Participation (if applicable): N/A
Justification for 0% MWDBE Participation Goal: N/A - Goal not applicable to request

Request Summary (Agenda Caption):

Request by the Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity for approval of an Interlocal Agreement with The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD in the total amount of \$3,891,457.17 to administer the Responsive Intervention Supports & Engagement (RISE) Program.

Background and Discussion:

Harris County, which is designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as both a medically underserved community and a health professional shortage area for mental health care providers, has over 4.7 million residents, and is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the U.S. Over the last 30 years, Harris County's population has grown 67%, twice the national rate resulting in substantial unmet mental health and developmental disability needs, particularly within racial and ethnic minority populations. Given the existing obstacles to care for Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) caused by social determinants of health (SDOH), COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased vulnerabilities for those with developmental delays.

Targeted zip codes most impacted by COVID are primarily populated by marginalized and/or communities of color, who traditionally use less mental health/developmental supports due to stigma, cultural views, conditions associated with poverty, lack of knowledge, and/or intimidation and frustration with providers and the diagnostic process. COVID has further exacerbated social determinants of health. Job loss decreased the number of families with commercial insurance traditionally used to access autism services; introduced food and housing insecurities, intensified educational disparities, and disrupted family structures; all primary needs that further hinder a family's ability to seek and participate in early intervention services. Barriers to accessing early intervention can result in increased maladaptive behaviors, increased delays (physical, occupational and speech), educational delays, and more costly engagement with other public sectors, e.g., hospitals, law enforcement.

The proposed program seeks to directly mitigate access to care barriers intensified by COVID by:

- Increasing knowledge of developmental milestones/delays, and diagnostic criteria for IDD (includes autism);
- Providing holistic information on internal and community-based IDD supports, including supports to address SDOH;
- Partnering families with certified peers to reduce stigma and increase engagement in this project and other long-term supports;
- Providing rehabilitative therapies (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy) to families who would otherwise not qualify under traditional Early Childhood Intervention criteria;
- Offering full spectrum Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy, regardless of a family’s insurance status or ability to pay, to promote healthy child development and educational success; and
- Providing advocacy through long-term case management, including person-directed planning, and linkages to services to address developmental and physical needs.

Expected Impact:

RISE is intended to reach Harris County families with new expanded Early Childhood Intervention resources and interventions. Specifically:

- Approximately 24,000 families will access IDD informational resources and navigation support through expanded 24/7 helpline supports, solely focused on support families of children with IDD and other disabilities.
- Approximately 160 children served through expanded eligibility to the Early Childhood Intervention program.
- Approximately 500 families provided support, guidance, and navigation through Certified Family Partners, a peer-to-peer support program for families of children with disabilities.
- Approximately 100 children served through Applied Behavioral Analysis - Skills Intervention Programming, an intensive evidence-based intervention for children ages 3-8 with Autism.
- RISE is a 24-month program with an April 2026 end date.

Alternative Options:

Commissioners Court could decide not to execute this Interlocal Agreement resulting in the inability to spend down ARPA funds.

Alignment with Goal(s):

- Justice and Safety
- Economic Opportunity
- Housing
- Public Health
- Transportation
- Flooding
- Environment
- Governance and Customer Service

Prior Court Action (if any):

Date	Agenda Item #	Action Taken

Location:

Address (if applicable):

Precinct(s): Countywide

Fiscal and Personnel Summary				
Service Name	Early Childhood Initiatives			
	Current Fiscal Year Cost			Annual Fiscal Cost
	Labor	Non-Labor	Total	Recurring Expenses
Funding Sources				
Existing Budget				
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Current Budget	\$	\$	\$	\$
Additional Budget Request (Requires Fiscal Review Request Form)				
2651 - American Rescue Plan 2021	\$	\$972,864.30	\$972,864.30	\$1,945,728.60
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Additional Budget Request	\$	\$972,864.30	\$972,864.30	\$1,945,728.60
Total Funding Request	\$	\$972,864.30	\$972,864.30	\$1,945,728.60
Personnel (Fill out section only if requesting new PCNs)				
Current Position Count for Service	-	-	-	-
Additional Positions Request	-	-	-	-
Total Personnel	-	-	-	-

Anticipated Court Date: 03/26/2024

Anticipated Implementation Date (if different from Court date):

Emergency/Disaster Recovery Note: COVID-19 related item

Contact(s) name, title, department: Estella Gonzalez, Executive Director, Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity; Don Titcombe, Associate Director, Early Childhood Initiatives

Attachments (if applicable): PDF of Signed ILA