



To: Early Learning Council
From: Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries

Date: April 30, 2020

RE: Respite Care and Virtual Home Visiting for Vulnerable Families

The Need

Current data around child abuse rates during the COVID-19 crisis are misleading. Mandatory reporters who may normally interact with children and their families do not currently have access due to the crisis, resulting in fewer reports. At the same time, Relief Nurseries are hearing firsthand that many homes are reaching a breaking point and may be operating in or near a space of dangerous volatility.

Tensions are increasing in homes due to economic pressures, school and child care closures, and the shelter in place order. Families are scared, isolated, and largely cut off from typical tools and resources. People are hungry. People are stressed about how they will pay rent and other bills. Research has demonstrated that increased levels of stress in parents is correlated to increases in harsh, punitive parenting practices and an increased potential for child abuse.

As parents and caregivers scramble to try to navigate new and incredibly difficult situations, Oregon must provide them with as much support as possible to make sure that kids stay safe and families remain stable. COVID-19 will continue to adversely impact our communities for months. If we wish to avoid these negative effects lingering for years or even decades, we must provide family supports and child abuse prevention now and in the coming months.

The Proposal

Relief Nurseries are proposing a two-pronged approach to support families during this time:

1. Assess families currently served by Relief Nurseries to determine those already in crisis, or at greatest risk. Criteria will include risk factors like previous or current Child Welfare involvement, a history of mental health challenges, parents expressed sense of overwhelm, or desperation or other signs that the family is at high risk. The highest needs families would be prioritized to receive respite care as it is available.
2. Provide virtual home visiting and basic needs support for all Relief Nursery families.

The Ask



1. It will cost Relief Nurseries more to provide respite care during this time due to a number of factors including lower teacher to child ratios, transportation, increased staff hours to ensure safe conditions, and the cost of cleaning supplies. To cover these additional costs during the crisis, Relief Nurseries will need ~\$150 in additional funding per-respite session. For 10 weeks of enhanced costs, OARN requests a total of \$97,500.
2. Immediate temporary approval from the Early Learning Division to provide this care within existing emergency childcare guidelines until respite-specific guidance can be issued.
3. Inadequate access to devices and most often, wifi, has resulted in major barriers to the provision of virtual in-home services. We need \$250,000 to supply families with devices and \$225,000 for technical support to Relief Nurseries to provide robust in-home virtual visits.

TOTAL REQUEST: \$572,500

We recognize that agencies are being asked to submit reduced budgets at this time. But we implore the Early Learning Council, the Department of Education, and the Department of Human Services to think about the broader impact of not providing child abuse prevention at this time. \$570,000 would cover just 19 foster care placements for one year. Our proposal will affect hundreds.

Respectfully,
Cara Copeland
Executive Director
Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cara Copeland", is positioned below the typed name.