

## **FY19 Duluth Public Schools/Duluth Head Start**

### **1302.24 Application for Waiver for Locally Designed Option Variations**

#### **Families in Transition**

The Duluth Public Schools/Duluth Head Start Program operates a State funded Innovative Option, allowable under State Head Start requirements. This Innovative Option called Families in Transition falls under the Home Based option, 1302.22. **In our State grant application, we have not been exempt from any performance standard requirements. However, because we are using the State funded preschool slots as match in our Federal Grant, a waiver is required to be consistent with federal grant requirements.** Below is our plan for working with families experiencing homelessness pulled directly from our current State Grant.

#### **Families in Transition**

Families in Transition staff meet individually with parents who come to us via referrals from other agencies, within our own agency or as a self-referral. We have honed and revised the process we use to work with families experiencing homelessness. Below is the proposal for our work with families experiencing homelessness.

#### **1. Initial Intense Phase- 90 days**

This begins immediately upon receipt of a referral to Head Start. FIT staff meet with the family as soon as possible to determine their immediate needs and talk about how Head Start may be able to play a role during this crisis period.

Goals include:

- Begin building relationships
  - Create safety plans
- Head Start enrollment documents complete
- Begin building a medical home
- Ensure the children receive Early Childhood Screening
- Assess the child's developmental needs

## **2. Building on Strengths and Creating a Support Structure- Timeline is variable**

Goal is to enhance the parent-child attachment to promote the well-being of the child with warmth and individualized high expectations.

- Social-emotional development
- Building social connectivity
- Focus on the needs of the child in all domains
- Connect with community resources to work on their family stability

## **3. Follow-Up Phase-30-60 days**

This is when we work less intensely with families who have met some or all of the goals they initiated in phase 2.

- Support resiliency
- Sustain stability

- Continue Social-Emotional development (child and parent)
- Build Social Connectivity

This model, developed over the 12 years we have served families experiencing homelessness in Duluth, began when we saw a community need for services that addresses more than the parent; focusing on the Parent-Child relationship during this most stressful time. We meet Head Start standards in this program option. The need is still great in our community and we have a solid group of partners in the community working side by side with us to serve families. Our Families in Transition Advisory Group meets as needed and is a powerful connection with front line staff from the Salvation Army, Supportive Housing, shelters and other service agencies. Many agencies will help parents find shelter, clothing, permanent housing, childcare and the like but they fail to address the children, who are also experiencing the trauma of homelessness.

The Families in Transition State Program option uses a Home Based model. We have a classroom where we often meet families one to one as there are few shelters with appropriate spaces for young children and our classroom is a warm and inviting place for both children and parents. The classroom is utilized for socializations, as are locations around the community. We are requesting a waiver on the duration for the number of visits. This population is very vulnerable and we have found it effective to be nimble in our response to family needs. That means holding families accountable for their participation in Families in Transition and knowing there are many demands on families in this position. In actuality, we may see some families more than is required however; some families may not always meet our expectations. Mental health, drug and alcohol problems and domestic violence are prevalent for the families we encounter. Those issues pose a barrier to the parent's ability to move forward. Our FIT staff

have years of experience in helping discern who is ready to make some forward movement and who may not be in a place to do so. Those parents who are not in a place to collaborate with our staff have the opportunity to be placed on our waiting list and may re-enter FIT when their mitigating circumstances allow. **While we do not know for certain if a waiver for the number of visits or socializations is needed due to the fact that we do know the make-up of our families at this time, we are being cautious by asking for permission ahead of time should the circumstances exist where a waiver would be needed to meet standards. Often we exceed the number of socializations and visits when families and staff form a strong connection and there are families who are ready to make changes in their circumstances.**

**Regarding the need for this type of option, what we know from 12 years of services to families experiencing homelessness is the environments families with young children find themselves in are not set up or welcoming for young children. Children then end up tagging along with their parent while the parent tends to the business they have with a particular agency. We are the only agency that is committed to supporting the parent-child relationship, working on developmental milestones, helping the parent know and understand their child's developmental needs and getting involved in parent-child activities that move the child and family closer to school readiness goals.**

**Summarizing the child outcomes for Families in Transition is a challenge as the children are transient and coming from trauma backgrounds. We see progress and celebrate little milestones. We have data showing boys and non-white students making great gains, almost the same as their white counterparts. We are particularly interested in this area as we saw our classroom statistics show American Indian and children of color scoring less than white students do in most areas. For FIT, the sample is so small it may be statistically irrelevant**

**but we choose to take pride in the smallest gains knowing the alternative is bleak for children experiencing homelessness.**

**Our caseload for the two FIT staff is nine each including some State Funded EHS children. For the purposes of this waiver application, we would like to waive the requirement for the seven HS children in this option.**

**We respectfully request a waiver for a variance on the duration for number of socializations or home visits for the period 8/1/18-7/31/19.** Approval from our Policy Council and Governing Board was obtained to propose to continue this option through our State Grant Option. **An additional document is attached to show child outcomes for 2017-2018.**

Respectfully Submitted,

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