

FY19 Duluth Public Schools/Duluth Head Start

1302.24 Application for Waiver for Locally Designed Option Variations

YWCA Childcare Collaboration

Our childcare collaboration with the YWCA Childcare Center is a long-standing partnership originally developed to meet the needs of working poor families who required full-day care for their children and would not be able to access the programming offered in our federally funded Head Start classrooms. This option continues to fill a need in the community for quality childcare. The YWCA Childcare Center provides enhanced services to all childcare families as well as in their partnership with the Young Mother's Program, co-located at their Duluth Spirit Valley neighborhood building. The Young Mother's Program serves and houses older teen Mothers and their children who are moving from this supportive environment to independence with their children. Some of those teen parents are enrolled in Head Start at the site.

Our collaboration with the YWCA Childcare Center brings the full range of Head Start services and standards to the children and families at the center. We assign a Duluth Head Start teacher/advocate to the childcare collaboration. Her role is to recruit families, train, and mentor and coach staff, advocate for families and is responsible to ensure Head Start Performance Standards and best practices are being maintained. She works a stretch calendar that includes summer hours, as required for EHS. Please note we serve some EHS children as permitted through our State grant.

The Service Area managers who meet with the Childcare Collaboration teacher/advocate to review the status of all areas of Head Start services and determine how we can best support the YWCA Childcare Center support this staff person. In addition, she joins the Circle of Security

group facilitator to provide a monthly Circle of Security group for parents. These parent groups are often a lifeline for parents struggling to make ends meet and wanting the best outcomes for their families. The YWCA Childcare Center continues to face the same challenges many early childhood programs face, meeting the needs of highly stressed children and families. Most of the children enrolled at the YWCA Childcare are living in economic poverty; many have suffered early traumatic experiences and are not coming to school ready to learn. The YWCA Childcare staff works to mitigate that stress and help both children and families experience successes in a supportive environment.

Childcare in Duluth is very difficult to find and afford according to the St. Louis County Childcare Assistance Office, with infant care being the most difficult. Most centers want full time children in their care so many families resort to using legal non-licensed options such as family members. Further, The Duluth Workforce Center sees individuals who are seeking employment. Those surveyed stated childcare and transportation are their biggest barriers to employment.

The State funded YWCA Childcare Collaboration meets all requirements of licensed childcare facilities as well as Head Start Performance Standards.

Our work with the YWCA includes the following:

1. Provide opportunities for families with shared experience to come together with the focus on their children.

~connecting with resources

~Circle of Security

~Parent driven parent meetings to include nutrition, health, child development, mental health support

~Child centered community events in collaboration with our community partners

2. Increase School Readiness and the Social Emotional Development of the parent and child.

~self-regulation

~understanding the concept of "being with" your child

~activities designed to build upon social emotional development and school readiness goals

Evaluation Measures

~Participation

~ASQSE scores

~ Child outcomes

~Self-reporting of parent perceptions, knowledge of child development, etc.

Expected Outcomes

- Parents will begin to understand the stages of their child's development. This knowledge will inform their parenting decisions and to strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- Understanding child development and attachment theory through the Circle of Security provides parents with tools and language to support their developing child and may be a protective factor for the child.
- Children will make progress toward School Readiness goals.
- Parents meeting with other parents, supported by staff at their site will reduce social isolation and increase the level of knowledge about community resources available to the parent.

Please note that although we are serving 11 Head Start preschoolers at the YWCA, the classroom is staffed with two teachers and can serve up to 20 children, staying within ratios. With the support of Head Start, they are often able to lower the ratio and thus better serve the needs of this stressed population. **There are non-Head Start children enrolled in the center that makes the ratio of 1:10 staff to preschoolers. Please see the Program Schedule, locally designed #1**

for details. The center meets all program standards as well as the childcare licensing requirements for the State of Minnesota.

The YWCA Childcare center has made some major improvements to the outdoor play space. Improvements include cedar fence panels on one side of the playground, offering privacy and protection. A pergola was constructed and covers about a 12-foot square area where children play with moveable parts to construct their own creations. Indoors, the State licensing has approved of rooms and play spaces.

The YWCA Childcare Center is located in an area of high poverty rates, a large number of low-income housing but few care options. The YWCA is a stable, progressive center and meets the needs of the neediest families in West Duluth. With grant funding, the center will cover gaps in childcare subsidies allowing families who would otherwise be exited from a typical childcare for lack of payment to stay while the funding catches up or the grant pays the gap amount. Extra supports not found in most childcare centers are the way they do business with Circle of Security groups for parents, parent events beyond what Head Start dollars supports and in many cases, lower staff: child ratios to care for children with big challenges.

Child outcomes are difficult due to the small sample size but the jumps in overall school readiness goals climbed from 27 in the fall to 41 in the winter to 62 % by spring data collection. These are significant gains and with the support of Head Start, give children in the YWCA Collaboration a good start to their school career.

We respectfully request a waiver for a variance on the center-based Head Start group size 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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