

Memo: To CBJ Assembly

RE: Status and impact of child care funding to increase access, capacity and quality for working families in Juneau.

In FY 2021, The City and Borough of Juneau has supported child care more than ever before, in a year that had the greatest challenges for children and families in recent history. This is a brief summary of the funding, activities, and results of four strategies: The CARES child care program stabilization grants, The new CDA Academy, HEARTS awards to early educators, and the new child care stipends.

1. CARES Child Care Stabilization Grants: (See attached report from JEDC)

Total Funding: \$1,050,000 direct funding to programs, \$7,000 in funds to AEYC to administer

Activities: Monthly grants were awarded to 20 of the 26 Juneau licensed child care programs, for 7 months, from June 1 through December 30th. Grants were based on 50% of tuition of enrolled children for child care centers, and \$250 per full time enrolled child for licensed family child care homes.

Results:

- Nearly all licensed child care programs closed in mid-March, and began slowly opening in June.
- The number of children served gradually increased each month of the grant period, from 149 to 248 children, nearly recovering to a pre-covid capacity of 283 in the participating programs.
- Three new child care programs opened during the grant period.
- In a survey of all participating programs, 67% reported they may have closed without the funding support.
- Juneau was the first community to dedicate municipal CARES funds to child care, and served as a model and inspiration for communities across the state, including Ketchikan, Sitka, and Anchorage.

2. Child Development Academy

Funding: \$31,118 (Unexpended funds from FY2020 HEARTS awards)

Activities: Licensed child care programs are required to have a minimum number of staff with a national child development credential (CDA) or at least 12 university credits in early childhood. Though AEYC regularly offers the 120 clock hours of training throughout the year in partnership with thread Alaska, in the past these have been offered in the evenings and Saturdays, spread throughout the year. Very few staff achieved the credential in a year. An idea from the CBJ Child

Care Work Group, was to offer an intensive program during the work day. In partnership with SERRC JobX program and Tlingit and Haida Child Care Assistance program and Tlingit and Haida Vocational Training Resource Center, a ten week intensive was offered last fall for 11 participants. Five interns were recruited from the JobX program, and these interns provided coverage in the programs for existing child care staff to participate also.

Results:

- Of the eleven participants, 6 have achieved their national Child Development Credential and are employed in licensed child care programs.
- The remaining five participants all completed the required training and two are still in progress to complete their work experience hours. Three participants may choose to complete their credential at a later time, but are no longer participating due to family health, maternity leave, or moving.
- In spite of the fall spike in Covid cases and a series of temporary program closures and moving the classes to virtual, the Academy was seen as overall a success by partner organizations.
- The next Academy is scheduled for May and June, at the Tlingit and Haida VTRC. Recruitment is underway, and will expand to Head Start and RALLY participants.

3. HEARTS Educator Awards

Funding FY 2021: \$180,000

Expenditures by Jan 1: \$47,485

Activities: This program has been sponsored by CBJ since 2012, and is effective in increasing the recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce for licensed child care programs. Early educators receive a wage incentive every six months if they remain working in licensed child care programs and have a minimum of a CDA or 12 early childhood credits.

Results:

- Due to Covid 40 child care workers left their jobs, and the workforce reduced from 88 to 68 in the programs participating in the CARES child care grants.
- In spite of high turnover rates during the pandemic, 74% of prior year HEARTS award recipients stayed. 21 early educators received an award of between \$2,500 (\$1.20 per hour) and \$5,900 (\$2.84 per hour) for a BA in early childhood or related degree.
- The long term goal is to increase to 50% of child care staff with a CDA or above, from 34% in 2021

4. NEW Child Care Stipends

Funding: \$323,750 for program stipends, \$55,000 for workforce development CDA credentials, \$8,750 to AEYC for verification of eligibility and payments. The first 2 months of awards was \$50,200.

Activities:

- A new application was created and distributed to child care programs, and monthly awards started in February, based on enrollments in January.
- In the first quarter 20 programs received stipends, serving 267 children
- Enrollments are still lower than before the pandemic, and the percentage of part time children has increased from 10% before Covid to 30% now.
- The total capacity of the participating programs is 386, current capacity in February was 69%.
- The program expenditures are lower than anticipated due to the lower enrollments, and four child care centers that are not eligible due to not operating full year, or receiving more than 25% of their funding from other public or tribal funding.
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Results:

- Enrollments have slowly increased each month, and are expected to continue rising as vaccination rates increase.
- The stipends were designed to increase capacity of infant toddler care, which has increased from 20% of licensed spaces to 41% of licensed spaces.
- All participating child care centers increased staff wages specifically due to the predictable ongoing funding from the stipends.
- Two new programs are in the process of becoming licensed due to the increased funding support from CBJ.

Request:

This year due to lower enrollments, and the number of programs that are not eligible, we anticipate returning approximately \$225,000.

Based on increasing enrollments, we project a total of \$625,000 needed for program awards at current levels for FY22. Currently there is \$400,000 included in the manager's budget. We respectfully request an additional \$225,000 be added, in order to continue sustaining the current capacity of child care, and building toward a stronger, higher quality, and greater accessibility for working families.