

## ARPA Community Request Application

**1. Project name (if you have more than one project, use a separate impact sheet for each):**

Meeting the Needs of the Oak Park Early Childhood Community.

**2. Contact Person:** John Borrero, Executive Director

**Email:** jborrero@collab4kids.org

---

### Agency Overview

**3. Please describe your agency and your organization's mission and/or operations.**

The Collaboration for Early Childhood is a nonprofit organization located in Oak Park, Illinois. As a collective impact model agency, the Collaboration for Early Childhood seeks to examine local systems, and create ways to impact local capacity to provide resources, information, and support for families and providers of children under five years of age.

Since our inception in 2002, we have embraced the vision that all Oak Park children should arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn. It is a large and ambitious vision. It truly takes a village to support our children. That's why we work with families and caregivers, educators and staff, health professionals, and systems leaders.

With these partnerships in mind, our work in the community falls into four service areas: Early Learning, Health & Development, Family Engagement, and Community Engagement.

With more than 70 agencies participating in our vision, the Collaboration for Early Childhood works to overcome the fragmentation and scarcity of services endemic to the early childhood field by integrating all of our community resources to better meet the needs of the youngest children and their families. We are committed to continuous quality improvement with a lens toward equity, advocacy, and data.

We believe that with a strong start, every child will have the opportunity for a bright future, and to thrive.

**4. For your most recently ended fiscal year, provide the following:** These financials are from our FY21 audit, which covered our most recently ended fiscal year, July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

- a. **Total revenues:** \$1,506,494
- b. **Total expenses:** \$1,559,258
- c. **Included in total expenses, how much was for salaries/benefits?** \$667,530
- d. **Total ending cash and liquid investments:** \$801,079

**5. Are there similar non-profit or private organizations that perform essentially the same services as your agency? If so, please list them.** No, there are not. Part of what we do as a collective impact agency is to coordinate services provided by other organizations.

### ***Collaboration & Community Partnerships***

**6. Do you have partners that you are collaborating with to support this program financially or in other ways? Name them and the support you will receive from them.**

### *Funding partners.*

We have a Contract for Early Childhood Services with the Village of Oak Park, School District 97, and School District 200. This contract is for specific activities related to supporting early childhood in Oak Park and River Forest. We also have grants that fund program activities and those funds are limited to the terms of the grants.

### *Collaborative partners.*

All of our goals in this ARPA proposal involve collaborative partners at various levels of engagement. The partnerships are described throughout the Program Narrative. They include

Goal 1: The four agencies that provide home visiting services to families in Oak Park (Easterseals, New Moms, Children's Home & Aid Society, and Kids Above All)

Goal 2: Oak-Leyden Developmental Services, Oak Park Public Library, Wonder Works Children's Museum

Goal 3: Local preschool programs, higher education institutions in the Chicago area

Goal 4: West Cook YMCA, Employee Assistance Provider, a telehealth or other mental health provider

Goal 5: Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation, Village of Oak Park, Oak Park-River Forest Chamber of Commerce

---

## **Project Narrative**

### **7. Please describe or attach to this form a description of your proposed program.**

Our full Project Narrative can be found on pages 2-25 of our initial proposal, which is attached to this document.

---

## Approach/Impact/Goals

### 8. How does the proposed initiative address immediate or delayed public health, economic or other community harms resulting from or exacerbated by the Covid-19 public health emergency?

#### *Families and Children Need Support*

COVID-19 has represented an unprecedented time of need in our community. Families have relied upon the Collaboration for Early Childhood more than ever before. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Collaboration has seen an increase in the number of families qualifying and enrolling in publicly funded preschools. We have also seen a nearly 300% jump in families who qualify for assistance. In response to these signs of need, we have increased our efforts to help families to find support. In 2021, we secured outside grants to increase our outreach to new and prenatal mothers and to support their access to health and wellness services, mental health supports. These efforts have helped to bridge some of the existing gaps. This proposal seeks to further close gaps in support for some of Oak Park's most fragile families: those families enrolled in intensive home visiting services.

#### *Searching for Wellness*

The Oak Park community relies heavily upon childcare. Because Oak Park is a place where people come to raise families, access to early childhood education is an integral and necessary part of our identity. For this reason, much of our support has gone towards ensuring that preschool programs are still able to function. Early in the pandemic, the Collaboration provided reopening support and guidance to programs, as well as PPE delivery and guidance around accessing Illinois State resources. As the pandemic's child care crisis deepened, we became a major support, a central source of information, and a lifeline to many of our program directors and family child care professionals. We also offered free, credited professional development opportunities focusing on trauma-informed practice, mental wellness and mindfulness. Although we offered as much support as we could, we were limited and many needs went unmet.

Solid and consistent support around skills-building has mitigated some of the potential harm that teachers and directors could experience, as they navigate a health pandemic and a time of social unrest. Although much of the community survived this period, the effects of this stress and trauma are ongoing. In households and classrooms, both teachers and families have needed support in understanding and responding to their own emotional needs, as well as the needs of children in their care. Children have nuanced emotional lives and have been strongly impacted by the pandemic. Adults, in turn, have needed support in understanding children's social and emotional development, and the behaviors that are manifested as a result of the pandemic. The Collaboration has worked on a small scale to give some parents and teachers tools for understanding challenging behaviors. In doing so, we have provided what we believe is a vital tool in our community's efforts to keep children in school and decrease the incidence of preschool suspension and expulsion. The more adults understand children, the more successful children will be. There is a need to offer this kind of support more broadly in our community.

This proposal seeks support to build mechanisms for offering mental health and wellness support to teachers as well as resources to enhance classroom practice.

## **9. Describe overall program goals**

### **GOAL 1. SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: HOME VISITING**

Home visiting is a prevention strategy used to support pregnant moms and new parents to promote infant and child health, foster educational development and school readiness, and help prevent child abuse and neglect. There are currently four home visiting providers that serve Oak Park: Easterseals, New Moms, Kids Above All, and Children's Home & Aid Society. These programs collect demographic and income information and track the developmental, health, and mental health needs of the families in their care. Home visiting and the related services are specifically targeted in the ARPA funding guidelines. Additionally, there are approximately 25 home visiting families in Oak Park whose income levels make it difficult to purchase basic health and emergency supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), groceries, sanitizing supplies, diapers, and baby wipes.

A yearly commitment of \$19,250 would provide assistance with monthly groceries, diapers, wipes, and personal protective equipment for the 25 Oak Park families in need of community support. It would also provide assistance in purchasing school supplies for their children. Of the \$19,250, \$5,000 would go towards the purchase of PPEs, \$6,000 would cover a year of grocery assistance for the 25 families, and \$7,500 would

supply families with diapers and wipes for part of the year. The remaining \$750 would be divided across the 25 families for the purchase of school supplies.

## **GOAL 2. SUPPORTING CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

A strong and responsive preschool classroom is a student-centered environment, utilizing a social and emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline. It is comprised of a set of research- and evidence-based practices designed to create safe, joyful, and engaging classroom and school communities for both students and teachers. Schools and teachers focus on creating optimal learning conditions for students to develop the academic, social, and emotional skills needed for success in and out of school, and building positive school and classroom communities where students learn, behave, hope, and set and achieve goals.

Social-emotional learning is the process by which children and adults understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; learn, observe and model empathy; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions. Learning to manage feelings, respond positively to stressful situations, and get along with others is a vital part of childhood development. There can be no doubt that what teachers believe, know, and can do powerfully influences student learning. Teachers working in the environment, and navigating the effects of a global health pandemic must be able to pivot and their beliefs about children and learning.

An early childhood community that supports their work will equip them with new knowledge and skills and encourage them to transform their teaching by putting their new beliefs and knowledge into action. We must help preschool educators to access social-emotional learning resources that will enable them to bring highly interactive, hands-on tools to the classroom. Social-emotional learning materials are a part of a healthy classroom setting and are needed today more than ever before. Preparation for this elevated level of practice involves learning materials and children's literature around social and emotional development; adaptive materials for children with developmental needs; and professional development for adults around the proper development and use of a social-emotional curriculum.

## **GOAL 3. EARLY CHILDHOOD RECRUITMENT & RETENTION**

Recruitment and retention focus on attracting new early childhood practitioners and keeping experienced, veteran early childhood practitioners, ensuring efforts are being made to fill position vacancies with qualified personnel and maintain existing personnel.

Recruiting and retaining highly-qualified professionals has been a long-standing challenge in early childhood education. Working in a historically low-paying field with limited to no benefits, early childhood professionals are often unable to support themselves and/or a family and need to find a different job. Sometimes that means that highly-qualified educator, upon completing a degree or certification program, moves to a K-12 setting where benefits and salary are much greater.

Other times, it means that the professional leaves the education field altogether in search of greater compensation. With an ever-changing workforce, providing professional development is a vital—yet costly—endeavor, with no guarantee that the investment of time and money will result in the retention of the newly prepared workforce.

The ability to keep the same staff for years is important because young children require consistency of caregivers, settings, and experiences to have a strong foundation from which to grow and develop. Staff turnover or children moving from one program to another because of quality issues and/or staffing shortages means that young children do not have the benefit of that necessary consistency. Children's development and growth can be negatively affected when young children repeatedly start over with building new relationships or learning new environments and routines.

In the Oak Park community, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the small businesses that provide early learning and care before kindergarten. Child care providers are reporting reduced enrollment even now that space restrictions have been lifted. Families are hesitant to rely upon child care, because centers may close occasionally to quarantine, parents may be un- or under-employed, they may be caring for children while working from home, or they may be concerned about safety since children under 5 are not yet vaccinated. We know about this dip in enrollment from local child care administrators and research.

To complicate this issue, low staff wages have made it difficult for early learning programs to retain staff when competing with other employers for less demanding, higher-paying positions. A preschool teacher makes between \$11 and \$15 per hour, but a delivery driver for Amazon begins at \$17 per hour in Chicago. In addition, early childhood staff are at higher risk of COVID-19 exposure due to the nature of their work and the fact that young children cannot yet be vaccinated. We propose a two-pronged approach: Enroll more children into early learning programs and recruit and retain qualified teachers.

## **GOAL 4. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

Early childhood mental health refers to the healthy social, emotional and behavioral well-being of young children. Early childhood mental health can look different depending on the individual child, their family, and their community or culture. Young children are learning how to experience, express, and regulate their own emotions and understanding, so there is some trial and error. They need to be able to experiment and learn while in a safe relationship with caring adults, who can give them guidance.

Current public and political attention to early childhood education and universal pre-K reflects a growing interest in making sure that children have strong early childhood education that prepares them for future success.

Research emphasizes that children need consistent, sensitive, caring, and stable relationships with adults in order to thrive. Adults who are well, physically and mentally, are likely to have better relationships with children and other adults than educators who are dealing with the effects of stress and trauma or struggling with depression or chronic illness. It is critical that we pay attention to, invest in, and be compassionate about the well-being of the adults who provide early care and education.

Our focus on mental health support is on relieving some of the emotional load of early childhood teaching and care by offering general wellness, mindfulness, and support to mitigate significant mental health events and emergencies. While intensive mental health services and counseling are certainly needed for families and people working in child care, we are relying on the mental health providers in our community to provide ongoing counseling and crisis management.

We are proposing a referral system for mental health support (similar to the coordinated intake referrals we already provide for home visiting or public preschool guidance), where we build capacity in the community to offer this support and subsidize these services for the early childhood community. This area has been identified as a high priority by 100% of those we surveyed in the community.

## **GOAL 5. SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

In Oak Park, child care providers are small business owners. They operate either a center-based or home-based business where they employ a full staff of providers, utilize vendors for materials and food, and contribute to the local economy. Still, these small businesses struggle because they rely almost exclusively on tuition to fund all of their costs. There are funding opportunities available to child care providers. Finding these grants, applying for them, and keeping up with the reporting requirements is a significant task. Many times, the costs of applying for grants (such as hiring a consultant to seek and write grants) outweigh the benefits for a small business. A standard small



grant application can thousands of dollars of consultant time and require significant internal capacity for paperwork and reporting. The capacity needs to be built in the community to support local programs from a central location. A dedicated staff person could be hired and become well-versed in the funding opportunities for which the child care industry is eligible. Under the Collaboration for Early Childhood, this person could help relieve the burden on program administrators who are already stretched thin and assist them in finding funding for special projects, site enhancements, and a variety of other fundable pursuits.

Additionally, while we are not able to pay teachers more than what they are paid (even a \$1,000 increase for each of the community's 450 providers would amount to a monumental \$450,000 yearly expense), we could allocate resources to help educators and parents stretch their dollars further. The Collaboration for Early Childhood would like to design a community-based discount program that would group early childhood professionals into a unified body and then broker relationships with local businesses on their behalf. The Collaboration would work with local businesses to offer discounts for people purchasing items for use with young children. In addition to extending upon the buying power of the 450 teachers and over 4,000 parents of children under 5 in Oak Park, this keeps dollars in our community and supports local businesses.

---

## **Program Eligibility**

### ***Strategic Goals***

#### **10. Can you describe a link with this proposed program and the Village Board's goals?**

Our proposed programming directly correlates to many of the values that the Village Board has put forward. We gave the community an opportunity to share their needs with us. This proposal was born from that data, which was collected from families, providers and community stakeholders.

In elevating community voice, we have aligned with the Village's core values. We have:

- Utilized a method that enables us to be **Community-Centered** in our thinking;
- Prioritized the greatest needs and committed to being **Fiscally Responsible** with these resources;

- Shown the community that we are worthy of their **Trust** and capable of translating their needs into respectful dialogue and community action;
- Remained **Transparent & Accountable** in this process and made efforts to show the community that their needs were being conveyed exactly as they presented them; and
- Organized the proposal to highlight opportunities for strong **Communication and Collaboration**, fully engaging an array of community partners in the upcoming work.

Additionally,

Our proposal helps families to access funding to meet the basic needs of their children and families, increasing **Community Affordability**.

By focusing on the families most impacted by the pandemic and directing support specifically the parts of our community that were most affected by COVID, we are also reaffirming our commitment to responding to the many ways in which the COVID pandemic has uncovered **Racial Equity** issues, specifically around access to basic needs, provision of free mental health support and involvement with school around student retention.

### ***Community Benefit***

#### **11. Describe the residents impacted (#, age) and over what duration; Is this program for low- moderate income recipients?**

Oak Park has approximately 3,800 children under the age of five. Prior to the pandemic, Oak Park had a network of 39 child care programs and 617 people working in early childhood. Seven of these programs were unable to weather the pandemic and have closed their doors. This is a nearly 20% drop in the number of programs available to families and a notable decrease in the number of Oak Park children who will find quality preschool in our community. The programs that survived remain universally understaffed and under-enrolled. The number of children under age five is expected to stay relatively stable for the duration of this funding opportunity (through December 2026).

Women of color have been hit especially hard: the labor force participation rate for Black women has fallen by 3.2 percentage points during the pandemic as compared to 1.0 percentage points for Black men and 2.0 percentage points for White women. Add to this the fact that the child care workforce is 92% women and that she, often a parent herself, typically earns less than \$12 dollars an hour.

## ***Race Equity Impact***

**12. What racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address?**

**13. What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? What racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination?**

One of the overwhelming effects of COVID on the early childhood community was the introduction of additional stressors and trauma into the lives of both families and providers. Stress and adversity are manifested in children through behavior and their ability to navigate their school and home spaces. Research has shown clearly the impact of these environmental factors on the relationships between teachers and children that serve as indicators for student success. Put simply, relationships are strained, and when this happens, children are less likely to excel in school. This, historically, has resulted in increased exclusionary behavior in preschool, with Black and Brown children being most heavily impacted.

Our efforts to retain children in classrooms constitute a very concrete and direct racial equity intervention, designed to keep Black children (and children who are dealing with a disproportionately strong impact of a COVID-related dearth of resources and support) in preschools by offering programs the use of an early childhood mental health consultant.

In 2020, Chapin Hall completed a multi-year Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) Pilot Evaluation across home visiting and center-based early childhood education and care programs in the Chicagoland area.

Chapin Hall researchers evaluated a 15-month Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) pilot of the Illinois Model of I/ECMHC, led by the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP), in four public health departments. The pilot promotes children's mental health by improving early childhood professionals' skills and knowledge. Staff improved their reflective practice skills and their knowledge of strategies related to child social/emotional development. The increase in reflective supervision and reflective capacity predicted a decrease in emotional exhaustion.

Another evaluation conducted by the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership detailed the benefits of utilizing Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs. Consultants partner with early childhood programs to build capacity in strengthening responsive learning and nurturing environments that include home, classroom, and other program settings. Consultation is primarily an indirect service that boosts the work of those directly involved in the support and education of very young children and their families.

Consultants work along the promotion, prevention, and intervention continuum with activities across the spectrum.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

- Supports nurturing parent-child relationships
- Supports the development of the child's social/emotional skills
- Reduces preschool expulsions and suspensions
- Supports the individuals who work closely with very young children
- Assists in collaboratively problem-solving issues that interfere with successful early childhood growth and development across settings
- Supports the quality of the workforce by increasing retention rates of early childhood professionals
- Reduces burn-out and compassion fatigue, thereby increasing job retention
- Enhances the reflective capacity of direct service providers and administrators

This clinician, provided for free to Oak Park programs, serves as a moderator of classroom issues, and vital reflective support to classroom teachers.

---

### **Measures & Reporting**

**14. Do you have program success indicators and progress benchmarks (list them)**

The indicators are listed as part of the Program Narrative inside each table titled “Measures & Reporting “ on pages 7, 12, 17, 21, and 24.

**15. How would you describe the impact to the community? How will these impacts be documented and evaluated that you are meeting the intended goals and community benefits? Please provide examples.**

ARPA funds have the potential to revitalize our child care workforce, empower families to re-enter the workforce, enhance the healthy development of our youngest citizens, and stabilize our future.

### **GOAL 1. SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: HOME VISITING**

- Supporting families with basic necessities is one way our community can engage with the value of being “community centered in our thinking”, which is one of the Village of Oak Park board values. Each delivery of diapers, groceries, and essential supplies to children in our most fragile families stabilizes that family and helps them focus on work and parenting.
- Documentation is on page 7 of the Program Narrative.

### **GOAL 2. SUPPORTING CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

- Children who understand how to regulate their emotions, and are given the tools to navigate big feelings act out less in the classroom and can focus on learning, playing, and growing in their preschool programs and in their homes. Through communication with programs via evaluations, surveys and tracking materials distributed we will measure the impact of our Classroom Enhancement Support.
- Documentation with specific examples is on pages 10-11 of our proposal.

### **GOAL 3. EARLY CHILDHOOD RECRUITMENT & RETENTION**

- Enrolling more children in early learning programs and retaining qualified teaching staff is the cornerstone to a community that prepares its children for kindergarten. Children’s development and growth can be negatively affected when young children repeatedly start over with building new relationships or learning new environments and routines caused by staff turnover. By recruiting – and retaining – educators, children will have the stability of a familiar face every morning with expected routines to help them thrive in a safe and stable environment.
- Documentation on this goal is on page 16 of our proposal.

### **GOAL 4. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

- Mental and physical health are fundamental to our community and society as a whole, and the stress and trauma of our health pandemic and social unrest are ongoing. The system of support we propose may mitigate emergency situations, as well as provide a more stable holistic environment for children.
- Documentation with more details is on pages 19-20 of our proposal.

## GOAL 5. SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Building capacity and economic viability through grant writing assistance and local discounts will have an exponential impact by making a dollar go further and providing long-term stability for our local business sector of child care providers.
- Additional documentation is on page 23 of our proposal.

### Project Cost

#### 16. Total Project Cost: \$1,109,300

Item	Overall Cost			
	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Home Visiting Support	\$19,250	\$19,250	\$19,250	\$19,250
Classroom Enhancement Support	\$53,500	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000
Recruitment & Retention Support	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000
Mental Health Support	\$109,200	\$109,200	\$109,200	\$109,200
Sustainability Support	\$74,000	\$74,000	\$74,000	\$74,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,950</b>	<b>\$269,450</b>	<b>\$269,450</b>	<b>\$269,450</b>

**Total ARPA request:**

The Total ARPA request is the same as the Total Project Cost, \$1,109,300

**17. Provide timetable when funds will be spent.**

We propose that activities begin immediately and go through December 31, 2026, to correspond with when ARPA funds may be spent.

**18. Do you need all the grant funds in one distribution?**

We are flexible on the timing of how funds are distributed. We can take funds in one distribution or on a set schedule. We do need to receive funds in advance of when activities occur and are committed. A suggestion is to have payments received on July 1 of each year to cover activities that run from July 1 through June 30 of the subsequent year.

---

**Project Sustainability**

**19. Do you have a plan to keep this initiative in place once the one-time ARPA funds are used? Please describe.**

Our hope is to gain equilibrium so that 4 years from now the need for funding will be reduced in line with the funding available. The immediate needs should subside. There is sustainability support with the grant writer position for programs to build capacity in seeking their own grants and funding and to strengthen their own systems to move forward.

## Timetable

### **20. Provide a comprehensive timeline to implement your proposed program and what is the duration of the program.**

#### GOAL 1. SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: HOME VISITING

- Quick to implement. This could start immediately.
- The program duration is through December 2026.

#### GOAL 2. SUPPORTING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

- Implementation of all initiatives is quick since this is already in place on a smaller scale. It involves identifying, purchasing, and distributing materials. Staff training is minimal.
- The program duration is through December 2026.

#### GOAL 3. EARLY CHILDHOOD RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- *Enrollment Support.* Enrollment for Fall 2022 begins in February 2022.
- *Staff Recruitment Support.* Full implementation requires additional staff support in a part-time staff role and hiring efforts could begin immediately. Partial implementation can be done with existing resources.
- The program duration is through December 2026.

#### GOAL 4. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- Community Wellness and Health Support: Implementation could move fairly quickly. Planning needs to occur with the partner agencies to work out how compensation happens, as well as other details.
- The program duration is through December 2026.

#### GOAL 5. SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Virtual Wellness and Mental Health Support: Planning and implementation could move fairly quickly.
- The program duration is through December 2026.



## Other

### **21. If you don't receive the funds, what are the impacts and will the program not occur in the future? What would be your plan to get this program running without ARPA assistance?**

These ARPA funds are to create programming that does not currently exist to address the consequences of the pandemic. Without ARPA assistance the programs are not likely to happen at all. Some responses to the pandemic that are already happening outside of this funding opportunity are outlined below.

The early childhood community continues to be at the forefront of the pandemic. As such, there are additional opportunities available for providers and families to receive support outside of the requests above. There are also many existing functions that the Collaboration for Early Childhood is serving that are built into our regular activities. Since the pandemic began, we have pivoted our typical offerings to include a focus on COVID-19.

Here are some other areas where COVID-19 is affecting the early childhood community. These areas do not have costs tied to this proposal but the Collaboration for Early Childhood is supportive of their implementation:

#### **VACCINATIONS**

The State of Illinois required child care providers to be vaccinated as of December 2, 2021. The Collaboration promotes local vaccine clinics and other opportunities to encourage providers to become fully vaccinated via the Village of Oak Park, the YMCA, etc.

COVID-19 vaccines are not yet available for children younger than age 5. When they do become available, the Collaboration for Early Childhood is available to help coordinate vaccinations via the Village of Oak Park's mobile vaccine van and/or clinics at central locations.

#### **FEDERAL FUNDS FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS**

The State of Illinois has been providing COVID-19 relief in the form of financial support to child care centers. The Child Care Restoration and Child Care Workforce Bonus grants are federal funds administered by the state. They are about to begin additional funding through the Strengthen and Grow Child Care program. As of February 2022, they are on round 6 of workforce bonuses that vary in amount. These funds can be used as one-time bonuses or to increase

salaries, as decided by the center administrators. The various stabilization funds are meant to assist with operating costs, workforce development, increasing quality, and adequately compensating staff to ensure that child care programs stay open. They also covered the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other emergency operating costs. Illinois considers itself a leader in the national administration of federal ARPA and CARES Act funds for early childhood.

These financial supports are very beneficial; however, they do come with reporting requirements and administrators need to keep on top of their announcements. Some aspects of what is covered are phasing out. We have outlined ways that local ARPA funds can help by providing a dedicated technical financial assistance staffer in the Small Business section above.

### **CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)**

In July 2021, the State of Illinois implemented changes to the existing CCAP program, which is subsidized child care for families who qualify based on income. The co-pay that families are still required to pay child care providers was reduced, the amount of reimbursement that providers receive was increased, and families who earn more money than before may still be eligible for the program.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT**

An ongoing challenge of the pandemic happens when people lose their income because they have to quarantine from work, or they have to stay home with a young child who has to quarantine from daycare. Employers may close due to positive cases and hourly staff are out of work. There are many scenarios where people, especially parents with children in child care, lose income related to COVID-19. During the pandemic, many families have been faced with economic choices that put them on the edge of a crisis. ARPA funds may be used to avert these crises.

ARPA funds may be used to provide "support for isolation or quarantine" in the form of cash assistance or other supports to people "facing negative economic impacts due to COVID-19". While the Collaboration for Early Childhood is not in a position to administer a cash assistance or similar program, we are supportive of assistance being provided to families who are experiencing these challenges. We are open to partnering with the Village of Oak Park or other agencies to implement such a program.

Of note: As of December 2021, the City of Evanston was considering a proposal for \$100,000 in emergency support for families and scholarship dollars. That

would cover financial aid during times of hardship (loss of job, inability to pay preschool tuition, etc.) due to COVID-19. (Evanston's population is 74,587 and Oak Park's is 52,233.)

**22. Can your program or a portion of your project wait until January 2023 to coincide with the anticipated next phase of community ARPA requests? What would be lost if this program waited until 2023? Do you have a plan to make up this loss?**

If we wait until January 2023 for the next phase of ARPA requests, children who are currently 3 years old will be 4 and will be preparing to enter Kingergarten. That's a huge amount of time for a young child. They were already 1 and 2 years old during the pandemic. In general, children attend preschool for 2 years, which is a prime opportunity to change their lives for the better. Most of the needs outlined above are immediate ones. Families and child care providers have been waiting for this community support and it's simply not fair to ask them to wait another year.

**23. Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for this program? Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for other programs?**

No and no.