



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0786, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services
Staff Name and Phone Number: Nick Honey, 565-4343
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Approval of Child Care Funding for Child Welfare Clients

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the Director of the Human Services Department to:

- A) Execute an agreement with the California Department of Education for the Human Services Department to receive up to \$910,489 for the local administration of subsidized child care services for the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.
- B) Execute future amendments for changes to revenue that do not significantly alter program requirements.

Executive Summary:

The Human Services Department requests approval of a resolution authorizing the Director to execute a contract and associated amendments with the California Department of Education for the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. A resolution to accept the funding is required by the California Department of Education. The funding of \$910,489 can only be used to pay child care subsidies to providers of childcare for children whose families are in the child welfare system. Additional amendments to the contract may augment the amount of revenue received and would not change any program requirements or other provisions in the contract.

Discussion:

The Human Services Department - Family, Youth & Children's (FYC's) Child Care Support Program offers limited child care subsidies to families involved with Child Protective Services. Priority for the subsidy is given to families with an active Family Maintenance or Family Reunification case, foster youth seeking care for children of their own, and relatives caring for children with active child welfare cases. For Fiscal Year 2020-21, the contract with the California Department of Education provides \$910,489 in funding for the Alternative Payment Child Care Program. This program provides child care subsidies specifically for child welfare clients who need child care in order to meet the requirements of their case plan. Funding for this program has been received annually from the California Department of Education since 1974. The amount is set by the State; the Department does not anticipate spending the entire amount because services are provided only to families with active child welfare cases who require access to the child care subsidy. The Alternative Payment funding is the largest source of revenue that the Department receives for the Child Care Support Program.

Another part of the Division's Child Care Support Program is the Child Care Bridge program funded through

the California Department of Social Services. This program is for eligible families with priority given to resource families, licensed/certified foster family homes, approved homes of relatives, nonrelative extended family members, parenting foster youth and non-minor dependent parents. The goal of this program is to provide families with short-term, emergency child care while helping them access longer-term child care through other community-based child care providers. This critical support allows families the time and flexibility to complete their parenting goals and other commitments while their child is cared for in a safe setting. The program is structured in alignment with the California Alternative Payment Program regulations.

The number of families who receive subsidies through the Child Care Support Program has nearly tripled in the last five years. Funding for this program has consistently grown in recent years, with an average increase of \$275,000 annually starting in FY2016-17. Funding for FY2019-20 was \$796,299 and increased to \$910,489 for FY2020-21. In FY1019-20, 188 Sonoma County children from 150 families were able to use up to one year of subsidized child care at a provider of their choice, which was a slight decrease from the prior year likely due to the pandemic. It is expected that as the pandemic continues in the current fiscal year, the number of families using the subsidy may remain lower than usual.

Beyond providing financial assistance for child care, the Child Care Support Program has a goal of increasing parental understanding of, and involvement in, their child's care experience. The program provides resources about child care and childhood development to parents and resource families. Human Services has partnered with the Community Child Care Council to provide individualized education and assistance to help parents and caregivers find quality child care that meets their specific family need around location, hours, and program type.

Another goal of the Child Care Support Program is to build effective community partnerships to help families transition to long-term subsidized child care. FYC's Child Care Support Program staff work collaboratively with other child care agencies to raise awareness of the needs of families involved with child welfare. Staff add families to the Centralized Eligibility List, which is a wait list for all state and federally funded child care programs in Sonoma County, and provide information and referrals to help families access long-term, affordable child care. When other child care programs enroll families involved with child welfare from the Centralized Eligibility List, families transition to longer term subsidy programs that help them maintain stability in their child care arrangements for as long as they need the child care. Last year, 37 children from 29 Sonoma County families were enrolled in longer-term child care through the Community Child Care Council or other community-based child care providers.

Summary of Fiscal Year 2019-20 Child Care4 Support Program Self-Evaluation

In order to comply with State requirements, the Child Care Support Program is responsible for completing an annual in-depth self-evaluation. The Self-Evaluation is reported to the California Department of Education to demonstrate that Human Services is monitoring itself in the use of the funding and ensuring that program requirements are being met. Due to COVID19, the California Department of Education suspended the requirement to perform the Program Self-Evaluation for FY19-20. In February 2020 the Family, Youth & Children Services Division conducted an internal review that informs the required Program Self-Evaluation. Recently, a self-evaluation team comprised of Human Services fiscal and division management, supervisory and line staff, randomly selected and reviewed 49% (18) of 37 children listed on the State report for November payments to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, and state and federal regulations.

Applicable sections of the Early Education and Support Division Alternative Payment Monitoring Review Checklist were used for each file review. Areas of review included attendance, completion of required application documents, Notice of Action forms, correspondence with families and child care providers, and other items as outlined in the checklist.

The monitoring review demonstrated that, overall, the program complies with and is successful in its administration of child care subsidies. Minor findings were cited in 3 of 18 files and corrective action plans have been developed and put into place to address the findings. For example, a completed Notice of Action letter is required to be sent to the parents within thirty (30) calendar days from the date the parent signed the child care application, but on three occasions the Notice was sent after the 30-day requirement. In the future, Division staff will ensure that Notices are sent within the 30-day timeframe.

A key component of the self-evaluation is a parent survey, and, in April 2020, a survey was sent to 108 parents/caregivers who received child care services through the Child Care Program in FY 19-20. There was a total of thirteen responses to the survey which is a response rate of 12% (a typical response rate for this program). Parents/caregivers who responded to the survey were satisfied with the quality of the program and indicated that having free child care helped them achieve their child welfare case plan goals, and helped them remain employed. One parent shared, "It is amazing. It has allowed us to work and have our granddaughter safe, happy and learning." Another caregiver wrote, "Thank you for all your support! Very much needed and extremely helpful to our family. Can't thank you enough."

A summary of the self-evaluation process, findings and corrective actions is included as an attachment, along with the contract with the California Department of Education.

Prior Board Actions:

August 6, 2019: The Board of Supervisors approved the contract to accept revenue through the Alternative Payment Program for fiscal year 2019-2020.

February 5, 2019: The Board of Supervisors approved a Budget Resolution and contract amendment to accept additional revenue and expanded use of child care subsidies through the Alternative Payment Program for FY 2018-2019.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-21 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	910,489	910,489	910,489
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	910,489	910,489	910,489
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	910,489	910,489	910,489
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			

Total Sources	910,489	910,489	910,489
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Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This contract provides revenue solely for the purpose of providing child care subsidies to families in the child welfare services (CWS) system. This appropriation is already included in the Human Services Department’s (HSD) FY 20-21 adopted budget. There is a county local match required of \$7,662--paid for with 2011 Realignment--to draw-down these state funds. As long as HSD pays this minimum amount as dictated in the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) section of the agreement, this program will continue to receive state funding for the foreseeable future, as it has been since 1974.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Self-Evaluation Summary
3. Contract with California Department of Education

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None.