

## MEMORANDUM

Kathy Gallagher, Director

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To: Family and Human Services Committee Members  
Monica Nino, County Administrator

Date: September 27, 2021

From: Kathy Gallagher, EHSD Director  
Aaron Alarcon-Bowen, Community Services Bureau Director

Subject: **FHS Referral #78 Community Services Bureau/Head Start Oversight with Staffing Report**

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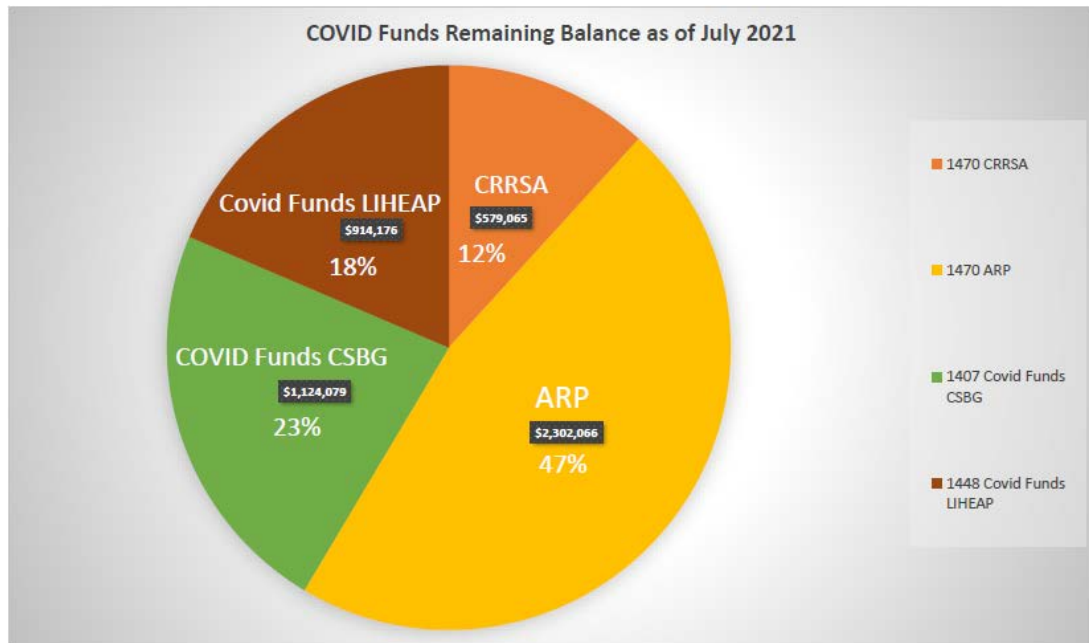
### I. Overview:

Please accept this annual update for the Employment and Human Services Department, Community Services Bureau (CSB). This memo will highlight key COVID-19 response activities, and topics and challenges that continue as areas of focus in the year to come.

### II. COVID-19 Response Key Highlights:

- CSB, the Head Start Delegate Agency and several childcare partners, have been providing modified childcare services since re-opening for the 2020-21 program year in September, with limited in-class capacity and strict infection control measures in accordance with federal, state and local guidelines specific to this pandemic. However, the surge in cases in the community over the past several months has resulted in the need to close nineteen classroom cohorts since July, fourteen of which occurred in August. Per the recent Office of Head Start guidance, we will “ramp up” in-class services in a gradual manner now through the month of December. By January 2022, CSB and partner classrooms will be at full in-class capacity and will resume the majority of in-person comprehensive services at a pre-pandemic level in all classrooms.

- New COVID-19 CARES Act funding to the Bureau totaling \$4,402,517

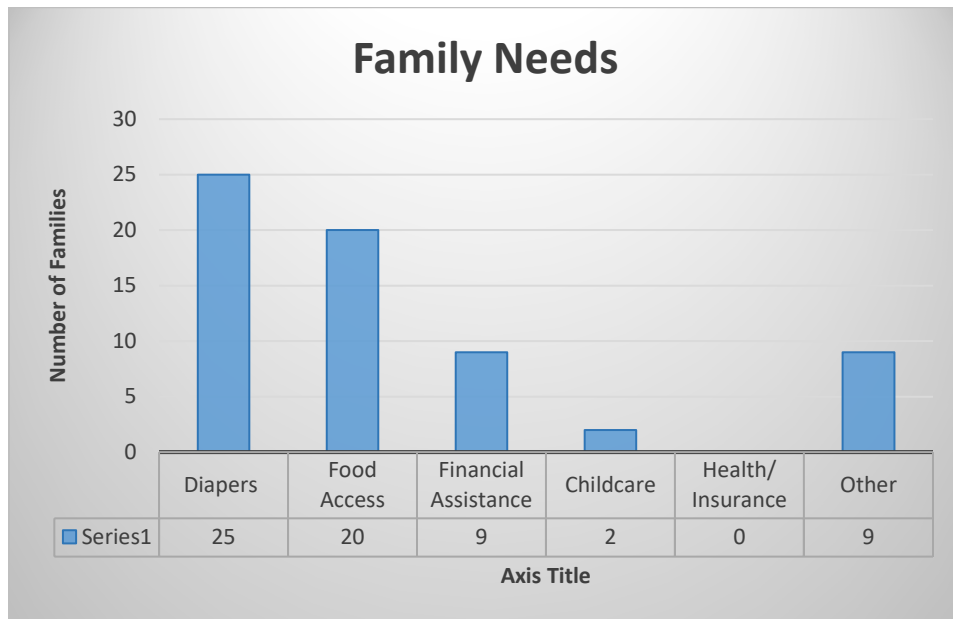


- These funds are being used in a variety of ways as stipulated by the funding guidance. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds are allocated to CSBG contractors by the Economic Opportunity Council and are currently used to support the community with housing (rental assistance, legal assistance, and emergency/transitional housing), mental health services, food security, and water debt relief. These funds are being used in a variety of ways where stipulated by the specific funder. Head Start and Early Head Start funds are used to support facility modifications, purchase of PPEs and cleaning supplies, conduct specialized cleaning, and purchase of materials, supplies and equipment used for distance-learning and on-site services. CAPP funds support childcare services for essential workers. Low-income Home Energy Assistance (LiHEAP) funds were used to expand services, with priority to those impacted by unemployment and Vulnerable Populations defined as elderly individuals, disabled individuals or children age five and under. LiHEAP assisted a total of 1,820 clients under the CARES Act. LiHEAP will continue to promptly and efficiently provide relief on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible households impacted by the pandemic under ARPA funds.

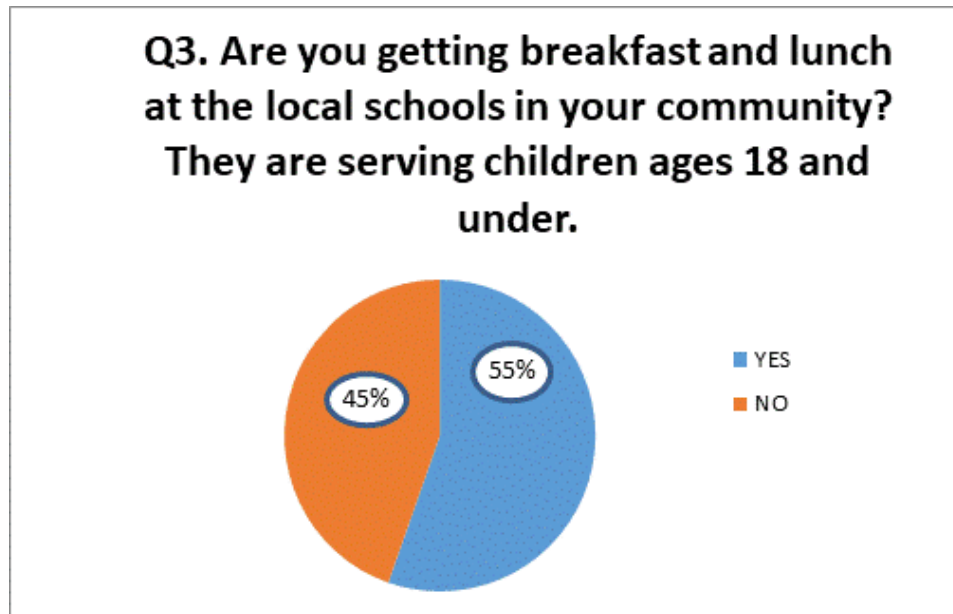
Despite some children having in-class services, all services to families have remained virtual this year due to the pandemic. All Comprehensive Services Assistant Managers now have their own Zoom accounts to be able to work with families virtually. This has greatly aided families in connecting with staff since most of our families are working and they can join a meeting during their lunch hours or breaks. We will continue to

offer virtual connection after we reconvene for those families who have schedules that do not permit face-to-face interaction. Face-to-face is best but having this option is an excellent tool.

- At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, CSB quickly established a Family Hotline for families to call when they needed assistance. As the year progressed, however, text messaging, emailing, and social media replaced this tool and it became obsolete as parents could contact us immediately. Use of technology has been maximized by greater use of Facebook and conducting monthly parent meetings and Policy Council meetings via Zoom. We are awaiting word on whether the Governor will extend the emergency order for the Brown Act and continue to allow virtual meetings beyond September but we are prepared to start in person meetings if required.
- To support enrolled families the Comprehensive Services Team re-tooled their approach and developed new strategies and resources to meet families' needs based on data collected from a newly established Family Resources Hotline and from survey responses. The Family Support Hotline showed the highest needs were in rental assistance, food resources and diapers.



The survey showed that families were unaware that schools were offering free breakfast and lunch to all children and their siblings.



- In response, a weekly “grab & go” distribution of diapers, wipes and formula was implemented along with a resource blast on text messaging, emailing, and Facebook of school-based and community food distribution sites. Phone call follow up was made to ensure the families were getting their needs met, averaging 245 calls per day. Use of technology has been maximized by greater use of CLOUDS IVR (Interactive Voice Response System) and SMS, Facebook and conducting monthly parent meetings and Policy Council meetings via Zoom. A survey on communication preferences revealed that phone calls were the first preference followed by Facebook. The survey also revealed that 72% of parents were not aware of the CSB YouTube Channel that has abundance content for distance learning, healthy cooking, and story time. By virtue of the survey, they are now better informed.
- Like all other County buildings, CSB’s offices and centers have been equipped with distance markers, postings and front desk barriers where necessary. Childcare centers have additional precautions in place due to the increased risk involved in congregate care including Covid-19 certified air purifying systems in each classroom. In alignment with federal, state and local guidance, these precautions include health-screening checks for all staff and children upon arrival, strict maintenance of small stable cohorts of staff and children that do not co-mingle with other cohorts, and additional PPEs such as smocks and face shields for teaching staff.

- A major focus for the federal Office of Head Start is staff wellness. In the spring a team of five CSB staff virtually attended 6-day Trauma-Informed Care Institute hosted by the UCLA Anderson School of Management and sponsored by the Office of Head Start. This training event focused on strategies to promote resilience and wellness for Head Start staff through a trauma-informed lens. The goals for this training were to:
  - ~ Obtain an overview of professional quality of life
  - ~ Gain an understanding of compassion satisfaction
  - ~ Understand the concept of compassion fatigue, and how the following relate to compassion fatigue:
    - Chronic Stress
    - Burnout
    - Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - ~ Reflect on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue as it relates to your life

As a result of this training, CSB developed a Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) plan that includes many of the strategies we learned, and we included wellness supplies and activities in to our Head Start Grants.

### III. Ongoing Challenges:

- Teaching staffing shortage: CSB continues to hover at a 10% shortage in our teaching positions, primarily in positions working with infants and toddlers in the Associate Teacher classification, as well as Teacher Assistant Trainees. The key reasons for the shortage are listed below:
  - ~ The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a loss of teaching staff as teaching staff retired or decided to leave the field due to its vulnerability or left to care for family members.
  - ~ Low teacher salary: This is an issue in our County as it is nation-wide.
  - ~ High cost of living in the Bay Area. Many of our staff struggle to make ends meet.
  - ~ Staff migration: Our greatest staffing shortage is in West County. Staff are moving out of the county or farther east.
  - ~ Transitional Kindergarten and other subsidized programs in the area.
  - ~ Nation-wide shortage: programs throughout the state/ nation are experiencing teaching staff shortages.

**IV. Staffing Issues – Successful Outcome:**

- In March 2020 Human Resources completed the Salary Study requested by this committee. Eight classifications were recommended for varying levels of salary increases to bring wages up to livable and competitive levels: Teacher Assistant Trainee, Child Nutrition Food Service Transporter, Community Services Building Services Worker, Associate Teacher, Infant-Toddler (IT) Associate Teacher, and Child Nutrition Worker I, II and III. The salary increases have been implemented for all classifications.
- CSB has embarked on a recruitment campaign for teaching staff by involving our teaching staff and Executive Director, Aaron, in recruitment videos that have been widely shared on social media platforms and with community and partner agencies. We have seen a slight increase in applicants for various teaching classifications.
- CSB is in the process of implementing the recommended increases and has secured Quality Improvement (QI) funds from Office of Head Start to support salary increases.

<b>PROGRAMS</b>	<b>QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (QI)</b>
EHS-CCP	\$104,540
Head Start	\$359,366
Early Head Start	\$113,826
Total QI Funding	\$577,732
First Baptist Head Start	\$ (47,181)
<b>QI Funding available</b>	<b>\$530,551</b>

<b>Total Budget for Teacher Salary Increase</b>	<b>\$ 651,633</b>
Shortage covered by Base Grant	\$ (121,082)

**V. Moving Forward:**

- Replacing CSB’s central kitchen: We have secured a space at 303 41<sup>st</sup> Street in Richmond. The building will require a seismic retrofit before the kitchen is constructed. The construction drawings for the project started in August 2020 and include structural work such as a new roof diaphragm, wall supports and new openings for the entry points. In addition, this make-ready phase

includes a fire sprinkler system, and in-floor utility work. Construction is expected to begin in November 2021 and will start with demolition of the existing interior. Concurrently, the kitchen build-out construction drawings are underway. The project's tenant improvement phase includes new interior walls, new plumbing, gas and electrical utilities, remodel of an interior ramp, new HVAC equipment, and new exterior ADA ramps and parking. We project the kitchen construction to start in May 2022 and includes kitchen appliances, office/cubicles spaces and bathroom upgrades.

- **Continued Investment in Our Staff:**

- ~ Growing our own through our work experience and ECE apprenticeship programs in partnership with Contra Costa County community colleges and other community-based agencies
- ~ Staff wellness at the forefront of our efforts continues to strengthen quality in the provision of our services for staff and community; our biggest initiatives include: continuing to embed Trauma-Informed Systems in all facets of our agency both in policy and practice; Reflective Supervision as a primary tool to strengthen and deepen various work relationships to support our Trauma-informed efforts in creating a more healing environment for each other and our families; and continuing to keep our diverse wellness efforts in place that include (but not limited to): wellness ambassadors assigned to each unit/center to lead wellness efforts and address needs unique to their respective areas; continuing to build/develop break areas conducive to staff wellness, and sharing and utilizing resources that support the well-being of staff.
- ~ Recruitment of new teaching staff that includes a robust and comprehensive digital marketing campaign utilizing state-of-the-art technology and highly targeted recruitment efforts. CSB is working on a proposal to EHSD and the CAO to issue retention bonuses to current teaching staff, and sign-in bonuses to new teaching staff.

- **State review year:** We received a Contract Monitoring Review and Error Rate Review by California Department of Education (CDE) on April 2021, held over from 2019-2020 due to the pandemic. The Contract Monitoring Review and Error Rate Review consisted of family data file review, classroom observations, attendance records, child portfolios, inventory records, site licensure, staff

qualifications and staff development program. CSB met all areas from the Contract Monitoring Review and Error Rate Review.

- We continue to be the largest high quality childcare provider in the county.