



# C.O.P.E. Family Support Center

3000 Citrus Circle Suite 220 Walnut Creek, CA 94598 (925) 689-5811

November 3, 2022

Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Chair  
Supervisor Diane Burgis  
Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Supervisor John Gioia  
Supervisor Federal Glover

CC: Monica Nino, Chief Administrative Officer; Adam Nguyen, County Finance Director; Tim Ewell, Chief Assistant County Administrator

Dear Supervisors and County Administrators:

On behalf of COUNSELING OPTIONS AND PARENT EDUCATION ( C.O.P.E.), I write in support of using ARPA funds for urgent and immediate family mental health supports needed.

The aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic are real and continues to have, a profound impact on children and families. This has led to both a substantial increase in risk factors for child abuse and neglect and demand for social, emotional, and behavioral health and family support services.

C.O.P.E. proposes the following programs delivered to unserved populations who would **typically be on a wait list** to receive services.

- \$40,000 for parenting support classes focused on African American and Latino parenting, empowering pride in culture, positive parenting for parents with children ages two years to 17-year-old. Outcomes: Improved mental health for both parents and children, decrease dysfunctional parenting, mental health issues in children, displacement, school truancy, etc. Our program provides tools for parents that create nurturing families. Start with the family, where an ounce of prevention makes a huge impact later in life.
- \$125,000 for adult group mental health sessions during the year (approximately 48 weeks) providing mental health healing and wellness for women or men (separate groups). These mental health sessions would be court approved for groups of individuals who need to explore emotions, process stress and anxiety and work towards a more positive mindset and healing in their families
- \$200,000 to provide individual mental health sessions These funds would provide 100-138 sessions per month:
  - Co-parent Counseling
  - Family Therapy
  - Child/Adolescent Play Therapy
  - Reunification (specialty therapy)
  - Re-entry therapy for recent detainees
  - Individual Anger Management therapy



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I respectfully ask for your strong consideration of an appropriation these funds, so we may continue and expand our work to reach more families in need. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely

***Cathy Botello, Executive Director/ Founder***

***C.O.P.E. Family Support Center,***

***3000 Citrus Circle, Suite 220 Walnut Creek, CA 94598***

***Ofc. 925-689-5811, ext 102, cell 925-818-7583***

*Our mission is to strengthen family relationships through counseling options and parent education*



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## **40 Voices Initiative Request for Funding of a Feasibility Study and Future Funding for an African American Holistic Wellness Hub**

Please accept this as our formal written request for consideration of funding to begin a county-wide feasibility study to explore the need for an African American Holistic Wellness Hub. The 40 Voices Initiative was launched in mid-June 2022, in alignment with the now National Juneteenth Holiday, as a diverse group of African American County residents joined by equally concerned allies. We reviewed feedback from previously held Listening Sessions on Reparations for African Americans, [click here](#) for more information. It was determined that a more strategic approach to address the many concerns and needs of people of African descent would be to follow the progress being made in a neighboring county that has begun looking at funding for an African American Wellness Hub and Resource Center.

To advance our efforts we have sought out support and partnership with The Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition (BJC) to seek initial funding of \$60,000 – \$85,000 to launch a 3 to 6-month feasibility study using current year ARPA funding. The goal of the study is to further identify the greatest needs for African Americans across the entire County. Our group members recognize the zip code a person lives in can influence future opportunity, but all of our participants in Listening sessions have voiced grave concerns about not feeling confident about getting their basic needs met in an appropriate culturally responsive manner, because of the color of their skin. Most African Americans living in Contra Costa County have experienced indirect or direct negative outcomes stemming from historical, structural, and systemic racism due to the existing culture of this county. Our holistic approach would create a multi-generational safe place grounded in prevention to meet the educational, primary and mental health, substance use disorder, spiritual healing, legal services, housing, clothing, and nutritional needs.

Once the study is completed, we hope to share it with the Board of Supervisors and other interested parties to clearly document the goals and recommendations to lead us toward ample funding for an African American Holistic Wellness Hub. Under consideration would be the eastern part of the county, possibly Pittsburg, which would have satellite sites throughout the county in African American Faith Centers and other like-minded agencies and coalitions that responsibly serve Black people.

*Respectfully submitted by*

*Gigi Crowder, 40 Voices Project Lead*

*November 3rd, 2022*



## ***A Call to Action:***

# **40 Voices 4 Wellness for People of African Descent in Contra Costa County**

***June 2022***

This call to action is designed to place a demand on Contra Costa County to replace words with specific and meaningful action. African Americans need an African American Holistic Wellness and Resource Center, operated by members their community and funded by Contra Costa County! A promise was made through a proclamation acknowledging racism as a public health crisis. We recognize the consequences of racism are demonstrated and were exposed in Contra Costa County by the recent acknowledgement that we were unable to close the racial equity gap for African Americans as it related to COVID-19. This, coupled with the current and historical harms experienced by people of African descent has propelled us to demand more of our county leaders.

Here are some facts that support the need for things to change in this county to create improved outcomes to make movement towards reducing the pain carried by this target population. This group has been denied the opportunity to realize its fullest potential by using missionary, non-effective approaches that cause further damage, versus empowering the community to use community defined strength-based approaches, proven to be successful:

It is well-documented that African Americans impacted by **mental illness** experience glaring disparities due to systemic racism.

- African Americans make up less than **10% of the population in Contra Costa County**, yet African American males typically make up over **40% of the county's mental health criminal justice population**.
- African Americans also have a **5-7 year delay in receiving a mental health diagnosis**. Both of these issues sadly result in African Americans being criminalized for living with what is a medical condition and rarely receive the services needed to improve outcomes.
- **70% of all juveniles** incarcerated in this county have documented mental illness and the bulk of these young people are African American.

The **educational** system has created a school to prison pipeline for many African American students.

- For decades now, many school districts in this county have been identified by the state as **failing African American students**.
- One of our county school district's records indicated **38% of African American students** were deemed to need an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan). This would mean that close to 50% of African American students are inherently intellectually challenged, yet in speaking with the parents, we know this not to be true. This alarming disparity is obviously the result of racial bias in the education system.

In the area of **housing**, we recognize African Americans are at the greatest risk of being unsheltered and living with food insecurity largely due to the lack of compassion and disregard for working with institutions such as the Black Church that fill the gap.

- African Americans made up **37% of individuals seeking rental assistance** due to COVID-19, which is 4x the county population. This highlights the lack of economic opportunity for African Americans in this county.
- **40%** of individuals who meet the federal definition for homelessness in this county are African American.

The information mentioned above highlights just three of the key areas where structural, institutional, and systemic racism result in African Americans trailing behind other groups. We recognize funding and advocacy from leading decision makers will improve these currently deplorable outcomes. Of course, we could also highlight the criminal justice system and its glaring disparities, the lack of employment opportunities, the lack of accessible primary care, and overall strained community relationships.

Do we want and deserve reparations, restitution, and an apology? Of course, but to improve outcomes for the African American community through stakeholder processes and subject matter expert informed interviews, we have determined funding for African American Holistic Wellness and Resource Centers.

We envision a central hub with satellite offices across the county that will be safe and trusted environments for African Americans to receive culturally responsive, community-defined approaches and resources offered by ethnically reflective staff. Our aim is to begin a journey of healing and developing a stronger community, which thrives and carries a sense of belonging.

When one suffers, all suffer. If you believe and support that, please join us in this call to action by participating at the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisor Meeting each Tuesday a meeting is held. If you have any questions, please email us at [gigicrowder0283@comcast.net](mailto:gigicrowder0283@comcast.net) or call Gigi R. Crowder at 510-990-2670.