

County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors
Supervisory District Four
Supervisor Susan Ellenberg



110862

DATE: May 18, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Susan Ellenberg, Supervisor

SUBJECT: Budget Inventory Item 09 – Bill Wilson Center – Family Advocacy Services

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve Inventory Item No. 9 to provide a grant to Bill Wilson Center in the amount of \$40,000 relating to the Family Advocacy Services (FAS) homelessness prevention program in the Santa Clara Unified School District, and refer item for final consideration and approval on June 16, 2022. (Ellenberg)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is a one-time cost of \$40,000

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Funding in the amount of \$40,000 is initiated by Supervisor Ellenberg to support families with children in the Santa Clara Unified School District who may be homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless. The goal of Family Advocacy Services program is to support and connect families to resources so their children can remain in school, giving them the best chance of academic success. By having a safe and stable housing situation, students have the support to achieve in school, including graduating and developing college and career readiness. The FAS program has four main objectives: (a) Families obtain financial stability (b) Families obtain and/or maintain stable housing (c) FAS children and youth enhance their education development, and (d) Teachers and school administrative staff learn to recognize and understand the issues facing homeless families/children/youth.

The FAS program provides families with resources and housing support so that their children can remain in school, giving them the best chance of academic success. For all FAS families, Bill Wilson Center provides extensive case management and as needed, housing search and placement, possible emergency shelter, rental/deposit/utilities assistance (through funding from other grants), job search, resume writing, and counseling if needed. The FAS Case

Manager helps each participating family to address issues in their lives and housing stability. Each family develops a Service Plan and is directly and formally linked to services that help sustain their stability. In addition, BWC will offer parent education workshops that help build financial/housing/legal skills and increase the parents' knowledge of educational rights.

CHILD IMPACT

The FAS program focuses on student academic performance, and attendance. Services provided enable children to return to school or offer early care help to moderate some of the disruption of a family housing crisis. Provision of high-quality educational services and supports to youth helps decrease the stress of parents associated with child care needs as they deal with household instability and other challenges such as food insecurity, low incomes and the need for employment that outbalances the ability to attend school. Families stay intact and with its multi-generational approach, FAS helps break any future cycle of poverty/homelessness.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action will have a positive impact on seniors who may be residing with student's participating in the program.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

BACKGROUND

Bill Wilson Center has been providing Family Advocacy Services in Santa Clara County since 2012. During the previous school year (2020-2021), FAS served 129 parents, and 236 children from San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) and Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD) in District 4. Further, 91% of SJUSD students improved their GPA at the end of the academic period while 72% did so in SCUSD. More than 90% of clients in both school districts were provided with housing support to regain/maintain a stable living environment.

FAS is based on best practices and is one of Bill Wilson Center's most popular homeless prevention and intervention programs. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' (Opening Doors – Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness) cites the promotion of collaboration between local school districts and crisis programs as a strategy for retooling homeless crisis response systems. The combination of factors that lead to a family's homelessness can be best addressed through the Best Practice of integrated and coordinated social services like case management, linkage to emergency financial resources, budgeting and financial management, family services, as well as addressing legal needs. While many people that are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness are eligible for mainstream programs, surprisingly few access the full range of services available to them. Sometimes it's simply a matter of obtaining lost identification materials, e.g., birth certificates or state IDs. The processes to apply for services can be complex, fragmented, and overwhelming, while

language, literacy and cultural factors create greater barriers to successfully accessing essential supportive services. FAS helps parents overcome these barriers in their search for housing stability, while at the same time attending to children that are most affected by housing instability. It is a truly multigenerational program.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

County staff will contact recipient to execute agreement and distribute funds.