

FAMILY ENHANCEMENT

Office of Community Services

Community Services Committee

Question and Answer 8/11/10

Submitted by Mike Kenitz, Executive Director

Parents Place

Q. Any consideration of a sliding fee scale? Why is a sliding fee scale not used?

A. We are working on developing a one time registration fee that would include a sliding scale with the option of waiver if need be. We have not charged a fee up to this point because not doing so was a strategy to increase access to all but especially low-income parents. We do have a donation box present where people can make a contribution.

Q. Does the agency charge a fee for mobile Parents Place?

A. We do charge a fee in some circumstances. It depends on who has invited us and in their ability to pay.

Q. Please explain increase in COM request for 2011 while other services remain unchanged.

A. We have asked for a 4% increase in operating over the two year period of the request. This averages 2% per year. Our cost will increase and in some cases such as health insurance, it will increase well beyond 2%. Cost to operate increase each year and it cost more to do the same each year.

Q. Are children/caregivers with disabilities served?

A. We do not track participants by disability. However, Parents Place is open to all as it is a universal access program and all of the facilities we are in meet ADA requirements. We are always open to making reasonable accommodations to facilitate serving people. We serve a number of children in our Play and Learn program who have disabilities including accommodating special services that accompany them to group.

Q. Are there plans in place to hire staff that is reflective of population served?

A. We have had a difficult time lately in attracting a diverse pool of applicants. We have tried a variety of recruitment strategies within our means but have not netted the results we have hoped for. We recognize the importance of having a diverse staff and need to continue to find more effective ways to increase staff diversity.

Q. What strategies are in place to serve the most high risk families?

A. Making the service affordable is one of the strategies. Outreaching to others who work with high risk families in other capacities such as Joining Forces For Families and Child Protective Service workers is another strategy. We try to be geographically accessible by being in multiple locations in the city. Mobile Parents Place is another strategy such as our weekly mobile Parents Place at The Road Home. This allows us to go quickly where high risk families are.

Q. Is the service goal of 720 participants unduplicated?

A. Yes.

Early Childhood Program

Q. Any consideration given to sliding fee scale?

A. A. We are working on developing a one time registration fee that would include a sliding scale with the option of waiver if need be. We have not charged a fee up to this point because not doing so was a strategy to increase access to all but especially low-income parents. We do have a donation box present where people can make a contribution.

Q. Is a waiting room (list ?) used for this program?

A. I think this question has a typo and what is being asked is do we have a waiting list? So I will answer both. We do not use a waiting room. We do not have a waiting list as everyone that comes that day is allowed in although sometimes it can get mighty crowded.

Q. Please explain the increase in COM request for 2011?

A. A. We have asked for a 4% increase in operating over the two year period of the request. This averages 2% per year. Our cost will increase and in some cases such as health insurance, it will increase well beyond 2%. Cost to operate increase each year and it cost more to do the same each year.

Q. Are program standards the same as MMSD/United Way Play and Learn?

A. This program is also funded by United Way. We meet on a regular basis with MMSD, CSSW and United Way staff to discuss and normalize program standards and curriculum and staff development.

Q. How many participants (children and parents) are served during one session of Play and Learn?

A. Size of the group is influenced by the space we're in but and there is some variance from day to day but on average we would have 18 children and 18 parents in one group.

Q. What is the participant/instructor ratio?

A. Play and Learn is not like child care or a school classroom in the classic sense of ratios. Parents are with their children in Play and Learn and are primarily responsible for their children's supervision while in play and learn. In that sense, the ratio is one to one. If you do a ratio on children and parents and staff and volunteers, you see a ratio on average of one to six. We have a staff person who is serving as the Play and Learn Leader and they are assisted on any given day by 2- 4 trained volunteers who are assigned to that group.

Q. Do you have plans to address afternoon and evening Play and Learn times?

A. We have thought about expanding outside of the morning and would do so if additional resources allowed. We have asked United Way for additional funding that would allow for that possibility.

Q. Provide more information on participants per session and group size, how is program addressing achievement gap?

A. See previous answer on group size. Play and Learn is a program that empowers parents and caregivers with skills to provide the best start for their children in learning literacy and math, as well as to support social and emotional development. In that sense, Play and Learn helps prepare children for school success. Our Play and Learn program is open to the community at large.

Q. Is there a separate group for Spanish speaking caregivers?

A. Yes. We have Spanish speaking Play and Learn every Tuesday morning at Family Centers.

Q. How many times a week do individual families attend?

A. Some families attend more than once per week. Some only attend once per week. We encourage parents to attend as often as they can but each family has different circumstances and availability and sometimes this changes.

Q. Do families participate in other Play and Learn programs in the community?

A. We know of some families who have attended other Play and Learn programs.

Q. Is the service goal of 800 participants unduplicated?

A. Yes.

Q. How do numbers add up? Seem to be 4 sessions out of 6 weekly funded by OCS. How does this match to 216 of 800 participants?

A. OCS pays for 27% of this program. The 216 participants paid for by OCS account for 33% of total participants. OCS pays for 1.62 groups per week which is 27% of the total groups per week.

Q. How does your budget/services compare with similar services?

A. I am not familiar with other agency budgets and cost structures and so do not feel prepared to answer the question.

Q. Please justify your staff expenses (administrative overhead)?

A. We have less than 1.5 FTE in administration, myself and a .5 program assistant who perform all administrative task.