



Center for Families

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Date: July 23, 2011
To: Community Service Committee Members
From: Meg Miller

Thank you for your ongoing support for the Respite Center Program. I realize that you continue to support us at a very high level, but because we are a singular part of the community's safety net for families, we believe your investment is justified. We also believe that an increase is justified. Since 2009, when we last came before you for funding level consideration, the Respite Center has done what we can to make sure we are as available as we can be to families in crisis – the occurrence of which is growing daily in Madison. This is how we have managed to cope so far:

- Since 2009, we have reduced child care planning time by 75 % and have put the hours into direct service. This has increased full staffing by 16 hours a week.
- Since 2009, we are serving an additional 14 children a week. Our numbers of unduplicated families and children have increased by 30%. That number reflects hundreds of children.
- We have not only increased our capacity by moving staff around. Through heroic efforts, the child care staff and social workers stretch themselves and are willing to say yes even more often than previously. Keep in mind that currently an average of 50 different families call for care in a typical 72 hour period. I don't know if we can expect to keep up this pace without some monetary compensation for their efforts.
- During all of this, we successfully merged with 3 other agencies that provide children and family services. This benefits the entire community by ensuring program longevity and stable succession planning. The families who use us did not feel a thing.

The Respite Center is the only 24-hour child care resource in the county and is quickly becoming one of the only crisis lines with 24-hour availability. We always answer the phones. For many, we are it. We get referrals from every one of the programs you fund and from those you do not. Hospitals, clinics, schools, daycares, shelters – the list goes on and on. Eighty percent of the families we serve live in the city of Madison. Seventy-five percent do not have, or never have had, contact with Dane County Department of Human Services. If we are to have a crisis emergency response for parents with young children it is every local funding source's responsibility to see that the Respite Center is fully funded.

Please do your best to fund the entire amount we are requesting. If this is not possible, at the very minimum, consider the importance of a cost of living increase. The policy or practice of giving the agencies you fund a yearly COLA is one of the things you lost during the last round of setting priorities. I understand that funding new programs is important, but chipping away at proven programs who meet priorities is not the answer.

Thanks for all of the work you do. It is a hard job - thanks for being willing to do it.

P.S. A few stories from this morning at the Respite Center:

- A 3 ½ year old boy (graphically) talking about and acting out sexual activity. (County Report)
- A mom coming for an intake – going through a divorce and has a child with seizures
- A mom from a domestic abuse situation looking for time to go to counseling with her 8 year old daughter and needs care for her two younger children
- A mom who walked in because she has a 45 minute gap in care 7:00 am to 7:45 a.m. every day . She has child care starting at 7:45 and has to be at work at 7:00 her boy is seven.
- A recently widowed father who needs care for his 2 & 10 year old while he has foot surgery next week.

