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DCYF Awarded Grant to Focus on Needs of Young Children

Private foundation funds will ensure that the most vulnerable children in Rhode Island are linked to critical services and supports

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (September 20, 2017) – The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) announced today it has been awarded a \$415,000 grant from the W.K Kellogg Foundation to continue improvements in delivery of services and supports to young children in Rhode Island’s child welfare system.

This three-year project, titled “Rhode Island Getting to Kindergarten Initiative,” was proposed to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation over the past six months as part of the Department’s ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for children from birth to five-years-old who are involved in the child welfare system. Each year, approximately 1,300 children under the age of six become involved with DCYF and they face a variety of challenges that can have lifelong effects on their well-being and future educational success.

Rhode Island’s Getting to Kindergarten Initiative will focus on ensuring that all young children in DCYF care have access to diligent developmental screening and services that will help support both children who face adversity in their early years and their families. Other goals of the project include supporting access to high quality child care resources for children in DCYF care and training to support all early childhood service providers and DCYF case workers who work with this population.

DCYF plans to utilize the grant resources to engage supports from all child-serving sectors including Early Intervention, Family Visiting Programs funded by the Department of Health, Child Outreach Screening funded by the Rhode Island Department of Education, Early Care and Education Programs, Head Start, the state’s Pre-K services, and DCYF contracted programs.

DCYF will be able to leverage the grant resources provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to build a sustainable system of service delivery and access to supports that will positively affect the lives of young children in the child welfare system.

“Working within the [Children’s Cabinet](#), we are dedicated to cross-agency efforts that support our youngest learners,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Eric J. Beane. “A year ago, Governor Raimondo set a goal to ensure that 75 percent of third graders are reading on grade level by 2025. It is through partnerships with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and others that we will make headway towards this goal, and help children in Rhode Island reach their full potential.”

“We are excited about this opportunity to partner with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation,” said DCYF Director Dr. Trista Piccola. “The goals of this project align directly with the goals of Governor Raimondo’s Third Grade Reading Plan and we know this project will have a significant positive impact on the children and families we serve. This project will ensure that all available resources are used to help our youngest children have the best chance at future educational success as they and their families seek to overcome some of the challenges they face.”

Here in Rhode Island and nationally, data suggests that young children who are exposed to abuse and neglect are six times more likely to experience some form of developmental delay. Sustaining an intentional focus on the well-being of children across all child-serving state and community agencies will ensure that they will have a strong foundation and set the stage for future success.

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The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) based in Battle Creek Michigan, was founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg and is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.