



Program Implementation during COVID Emergency July – December 2020

Introduction

PCL focused grantee mid-year report questions on how the pandemic affected program start-up for new programs and program delivery overall. Report questions differed somewhat between program areas to address unique issues, particularly in hunger relief. Most grantees reported:

- Number of people served (children and/or parents/caregivers)
- Successes and challenges in recruiting and enrolling new program participants
- Successes and challenges in providing virtual services
- Whether/how mental health issues surfaced for program participants
- Any support needed from PCL for program, staff and/or clients; any specific supports needed to address mental health concerns for youth/families

Most hunger relief grantees also reported the amount of food provided to people (pounds, meals, food boxes etc.). PCL staff compared number of people served at midyear to annual goals, and themed grantees' responses to the questions listed above. This report summarizes that data. Hunger relief data is provided separately for reasons detailed below.

Service Goals

Grantees reporting on people served in early childhood, mentoring, after school, child abuse prevention/intervention and foster care served 3,877 people during the reporting period, 46% of the combined annual goals in these program areas. Typically, grantees reach around 50% of their annual goal by mid-year. Data varied by program areas. In child abuse prevention/intervention, 2 programs did not serve clients during the reporting period (1 start-up, 1 drop-in program closed to the public). In foster care, 5 new start-up programs faced significant challenges in hiring staff and receiving referrals from child welfare which resulted in serving no or few youth.

After school programs continued to face challenges in serving youth including: no access to family/student contact info while schools are closed which hampers recruitment and enrollment; SUN programs are not facilitating enrollment in after school activities during the pandemic; and difficulty engaging youth in virtual group programming after a day of virtual school. Many after school grantees provided more individualized services for youth and families during the pandemic, which limited the total number of people served.

The Community Childcare Initiative (CCI) served 162 children as the mid-year, 81% of its annual goal. Children, including school age children, were in care with 32 childcare providers. Two highlights at the mid-year: Among the families served by CCI, some parents participated in 3-month job search programs administered by Oregon Department of Human Services. CCI funds supplemented state subsidy for those families, assuring children had full time care and didn't

lose their childcare placement while parents searched for employment. CCI also continued serving school-age children during the school day, and childcare providers navigated distance learning for those students, assuring students attended live instruction and completed assigned schoolwork.

Program Enrollment: Successes and Challenges

Many grantees noted successes in continuing to receive referrals, building new referral partners, and growing word-of-mouth referrals from staff and agency networks. Some programs noted increased flexibility and creativity in outreach, recruitment and enrollment methods, and successes in hiring new staff despite the pandemic. A few programs highlighted making ongoing improvements in virtual enrollment processes.

Grantees identified many similar challenges in recruitment and enrollment. The most mentioned challenge was virtual outreach: more difficult and time consuming to create connection, not culturally responsive in some communities, and many families are overwhelmed with challenges. Many grantees noted difficulty getting enrollment paperwork completed, and that technological issues were a significant barrier for many families. Some grantees had staffing challenges (staff on leave, difficulties in hiring, turnover in staff doing referral work). Some had fewer referrals for their services.

Virtual Program Services: Successes and Challenges

Most grantees offered live, virtual services where youth, caregivers, and/or families interacted with program staff individually or in a group. Many grantees successfully adapted virtual programming to meet families' needs during the pandemic and built relationships virtually. Some programs found it was easier for people to engage and build relationships in a virtual setting (easier/more frequent access, more flexible timing, fewer logistics to manage). Some programs noted success in supporting families, helping to reduce their stress and increasing safety for family members. A few programs noted that parents gained new skills including proficiency using a range of virtual communications technology.

The most common challenges grantees had in engaging people in virtual services were family technological issues including devices, bandwidth, internet connection, platforms, and difficulty solving technological problems for families. Many grantees also noted challenges with screen fatigue for children/youth, and families focused more on meeting basic needs than program participation. Other challenges mentioned by some grantees include program staff technological issues; caregivers and youth felt overwhelmed, stressed and isolated and therefore unable to participate; families juggling distance learning for school-aged youth and had less time to manage virtual participation in other activities. A few mentioned lack of private or quiet space for participation.

Mental Health Issues

Most grantees said that mental health issues for youth and parents/caregivers have surfaced in interactions between program staff and clients. Not surprisingly, grantees described children and families experiencing isolation, stress, anxiety, grief from the virus and its effects on family

and community members, exhaustion, frustration with virtual school and virtual interactions with peers, and lack of motivation to engage in school or other programming. Many grantees have sought additional mental health resources for youth and caregivers and noted limited resources available, especially culturally specific mental health services.

Support Needed from PCL

Many grantees expressed appreciation for PCL's flexibility in the face of extraordinary circumstances, the ability to use PCL funds to meet families' basic needs and for providing information on additional community resources. Some grantees requested the following additional supports:

- Continued flexibility in meeting youth/family needs, including mental health needs
- Assist grantees in finding additional mental health resources for youth/families including culturally specific therapists
- Convene grantees within program areas to share knowledge on mental health resources available and learn more about complementary community resources for clients. Foster care grantees are already meeting as a group and want to continue
- Training on virtual program ideas, best practices for virtual program delivery and help with virtual enrollment systems
- Assistance getting the word out on new programs.

Hunger Relief Program Implementation Themes

Grantees providing emergency food through school, community-based and mobile pantries are all serving more people and providing more food than would be expected by mid-year in response to continued high demand for food relief throughout the community. Many of these grantees have had to purchase more food for distribution during the pandemic due to greater inconsistency in donated resources, and lack of culturally specific foods, fresh foods and key staples in donated resources.

Two grantees that are focused primarily on education (Familias en Accion and Growing Gardens) pivoted to help with emergency food distribution including home delivery of food boxes, and school-based food delivery including produce harvested from school gardens. Growing Gardens delivered food and garden activity kits at school-based food distributions and also created virtual garden/food education programming for use by teachers. Familias en Accion has provided asynchronous virtual content on food resources and food rights and is planning to begin live virtual education programming later in the fiscal year.

Meals on Wheels People provides home delivered meals and bulk foods, and nearly met *annual* goals for people served/meals provided at mid-year. They continue to experience high demand for food resources. Janus Village Gardens provides free and discounted fresh foods at the local market in the New Columbia housing development and is on target to meet annual service goals. They noted that overall traffic in the store has decreased, but those using the store are making larger purchases.