



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

July 24, 2024

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-4  
Maryland Community Health Resources Commission Hub Pilot Grant (\$423,271)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #25-4 *Maryland Community Health Resources Commission Hub Pilot Grant* has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice for students from pre-kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The grant funds will be used to coordinate the delivery of behavioral health services and position the County to increase access to mental health services for students, especially those who may have poor behavioral and mental health social determinants and influencers. To the extent possible, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should report data collected through the program, including demographic data and the utilization of services provided. This will aid in identifying any trends and gaps, as well as progress in addressing racial disparities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #25-4 is to utilize grant funds from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) to designate DHHS<sup>1</sup> as a Coordinated Community Supports Partnerships Hub (Hub) and pilot the expansion of access to comprehensive behavioral health and related services for students.<sup>2</sup> The CHRC is the fiscal

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<sup>1</sup> The DHHS is designated as the County's Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA).

<sup>2</sup> <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Documents/002%20-%20MD%20Consortium%20Documents%20%26%20Info/02%20-%20Hub%20RFP/List%20of%20Consortium%20Hub%20pilot%20awards.pdf>

agent of the Maryland Consortium of Coordinated and Community Supports (Consortium), established under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.<sup>3</sup> The Consortium is responsible for developing a statewide framework to expand access to comprehensive behavioral health and wraparound services for Maryland students.<sup>4</sup> Expansion of access is planned through a hub-and-spoke service delivery model, with the County acting as the Hub and behavioral health service providers acting as the "Spokes". The County is tasked with setting up a local framework for expanding access to care, planning and oversight, and coordination of activities. The grant funds will allow DHHS to create three new grant-funded positions, which will be ongoing for a term of 10 years.

In July 2024, the Consortium issued an annual report providing background on the entity's creation, detailing the framework for expanding access to mental health services and describing activities that are underway, implemented, or completed. There are three statutory purposes of the Consortium, which include:

- 1) Support the development of coordinated community support partnerships to meet student behavioral health needs and other related challenges in a holistic, non-stigmatized, and coordinated manner;
- 2) Provide expertise for the development of best practices in the delivery of behavioral health services, supports, and wraparound services; and
- 3) Provide technical assistance to local school systems to support positive classroom environments and close achievement gaps.<sup>5</sup>

Under the collective impact model for Partnerships or hub-and-spoke model, Montgomery County's hub will perform the following core functions:

- **Service Delivery:** Ensure the delivery of holistic services at all MTSS tiers, adhere to best practices, and coordinate all partners in the service area.
- **Fiduciary:** receive grant dollars; be accountable to the CHRC for grant funds; distribute funds to service providers as subgrantees; ensure maximization of third-party billing, including Medicaid; and leverage funds from other sources.

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<sup>3</sup> The Maryland General Assembly included language in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Chapter 36 of 2021 (Kirwan education reform bill), to create a new Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to help meet student behavioral health needs and other related challenges in a holistic, non-stigmatized manner. Available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Pages/home.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports - Annual Report. July 2024. Available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Documents/001%20-%20Holding%20Folder%20for%20Documents/July%202024%20Documents%20for%20Upload/Consortium%20annual%20report,%20final,%20full%20report%207.9.24.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> IBID.

- **Data:** collect accountability data from service providers; report data to Consortium and CHRC; and analyze and act on data.<sup>6</sup>

The Annual Report also outlined deliverables required from the DHHS, that will enable the County to become a full Community Supports Partnership Hub in the future. These deliverables include: 1) Hub governance roles and responsibilities; 2) Needs Assessment; 3) Asset Map; 4) Service referral process; 5) Potential staffing model and budget for future Partnership Hub; 6) Data-sharing plan; and 7) Signed MOUs with schools and service providers.<sup>7</sup>

As shared in the Annual Report, the pilot program is designed to help organizations develop the ability to act as Partnership Hubs in the future. It will also test important aspects of the model before it is rolled out statewide. The Hubs will coordinate the behavioral health services provided through the grant and ensure that service providers meet performance standards.<sup>8</sup>

- III. **ANALYSIS:** The Hub Pilot grant positions the County to address barriers to accessing mental health services, such as cost and transportation, particularly for BIPOC students and students from low-income families. A recent KFF survey examined the racial and ethnic disparities in mental health care.<sup>9</sup> The findings indicated mental health disparities exist among racial and ethnic groups, due to underdiagnosis and barriers to accessing mental health services. The report reinforced that in addition to common barriers such as cost, not knowing where to obtain care, and insurance acceptance, BIPOC encounter additional barriers to accessing care. These factors include “the lack of a diverse mental health care workforce, the absence of culturally informed treatment options, and stereotypes and discrimination associated with poor mental health.”<sup>10</sup>

A 2020 report, Understanding Social Influencers of Health and Education, co-authored by the National Center for School Mental Health, whom the Consortium works closely with for training and technical assistance, along with the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, and the School-Based Health Alliance, defined the Social Influences of Health and Education (SIHE).<sup>11</sup> The report makes a distinction between Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and SIHE. It notes that SDoH are the characteristics in a child’s

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<sup>6</sup> IBID.

<sup>7</sup> IBID

<sup>8</sup> IBID

<sup>9</sup> Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health Care: Findings from the KFF Survey of Racism, Discrimination and Health. May 2024. Available at: [https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-mental-health-care-findings-from-the-kff-survey-of-racism-discrimination-and-health/#:~:text=White%20adults%20\(24%25\)%20are,younger%20and%20have%20lower%20incomes.](https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-mental-health-care-findings-from-the-kff-survey-of-racism-discrimination-and-health/#:~:text=White%20adults%20(24%25)%20are,younger%20and%20have%20lower%20incomes.)

<sup>10</sup> IBID.

<sup>11</sup> Understanding Social Influencers of Health and Education: A Role for School-Based Health Centers and Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems. August 2020. Available at: <https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/media/som/microsites/ncsmh/documents/fliers-resources-misc-docs/resources/Understanding-Social-Influencers-of-Health-and-Education.pdf>.

surroundings that affect a wide range of health, functioning, prevalence of risks, and quality-of-life outcomes. On the other hand, SIHE highlights the potential for positive change when social and environmental factors are identified and addressed early on.<sup>12</sup> SIHE factors are illustrated in the following diagram.



**Source:** Understanding Social Influencers of Health and Education: A Role for School-Based Health Centers and Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems. August 2020. Available at: <https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/media/som/microsites/ncsmh/documents/fliers-resources-misc-docs/resources/Understanding-Social-Influencers-of-Health-and-Education.pdf>

The report also highlights the critical role of SIHE in shaping both health and educational outcomes for students, positively or negatively. The report also notes that social and environmental factors impact the growth, development, and well-being of school-aged children, youth, and their families and can also drive student educational outcomes. The research also discussed how students exposed to multiple negative SIHE experience greater disparities in health and learning outcomes and “these outcomes are often experienced disproportionately by race and ethnicity and contribute to health inequities, learning disruptions, and opportunity gaps.” Socioeconomic status was also indicated as a key predictor of well-being, influencing access to stable housing, food security, and safe and

<sup>12</sup> IBID.

accessible parks and playgrounds. Subsequently, children from lower-income families frequently encounter more significant health challenges, receive lower-quality medical care, and achieve less academic success, underscoring the interconnected nature of social factors, health, and education.<sup>13</sup>

ORESJ has written about mental health services County-wide and within the school system. The REIAs have described the importance of addressing the impacts of SDoH, racial inequities in mental health outcomes, and how targeted investments have the potential to improve mental health outcomes for BIPOC youth and residents. ORESJ recommends consulting previous REIAs for additional analysis on the intersection of racial equity and mental health, which can be found in the following assessments.

- 1) REIA #22-16 – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Behavior and Mental Health  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-16.pdf>
- 2) REIA #23-19 – Youth Harm Initiative  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-19.pdf>
- 3) REIA #24-17 – Department of Health and Human Services Behavioral Health and Crisis Service’s Trauma Services  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-17.pdf>
- 4) REIA #24-45 – Department of Health and Human Services Youth Safety Initiative Special Assistant <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-45.pdf>

cc: James C. Bridgers, Jr., Ph.D., MBA, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
Dr. Kisha Davis, MD, MPH, Montgomery County Health Officer, DHHS  
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

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<sup>13</sup> IBID.