



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION #20131113-6a3

Date: **November 13, 2013**

Subject: **Recommendations for Social Services Request for Applications**

Recommendation to Council

In order to ensure that the needs of **young children and their families** are met in awards made through the upcoming social services request for applications, the City of Austin Early Childhood Council recommends that the following considerations be taken into account. It is important that these scarce dollars serve a range of populations, needs and purposes in our community.

- a. Balanced priorities.** Give equal weight to programs that represent different points on a continuum from prevention to intervention to treatment. Direct services for basic needs are important, but intervention and prevention programs are also essential to reduce the number of people who require those services.
- b. Evidence based.** Give weight to programs that provide documentation of both short-term and long-term program effectiveness or provide plans for evaluation of effectiveness and cost efficiency (see attached).
- c. Data driven.** Give weight to programs that address goals and needs identified in community conditions data and community plans (e.g., School Readiness Action Plan, Imagine Austin, and Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan).

Background and Rationale: During the last competition for social service contracts, the weights assigned to different scoring criteria resulted in the exclusion of many intervention and prevention programs that serve families of young children and meet essential community needs.

The Early Childhood Council believes that the proposed criteria will lead to more equitable funding for early childhood programs and a balance of funding across the prevention-intervention-treatment continuum. Without a balanced system, we are ensuring that our community will be reacting to more and more people whose basic needs are not being met.

Many early childhood programs are supported by strong evidence of both short-term and long-term effects. According to nationally-prominent economists, the **Return on Investment** is greater the earlier in life a person receives interventions and prevention programs because these services reduce such social problems as child abuse, need for special education, delinquency, and poverty in adulthood.

Please see:

The Foundation for Child Development and the Society for Research in Child Development publication "**Investing in our future: The evidence base on Preschool Education**" at:

Executive Summary:

http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children_summary.pdf

Full Report:

http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf

"**A Model for Decision-Making Based on Evidence**", attached.

Vote

Moved By: **Council Member Sofia Casini** Seconded By: **Council Member Aletha Huston**

For: **10** Against: **0** Abstain: **0**

Absent: Council Members Albert Black, Debra Keith-Thompson, and Avis Wallace.

Attest:



Kyle Holder, Chair

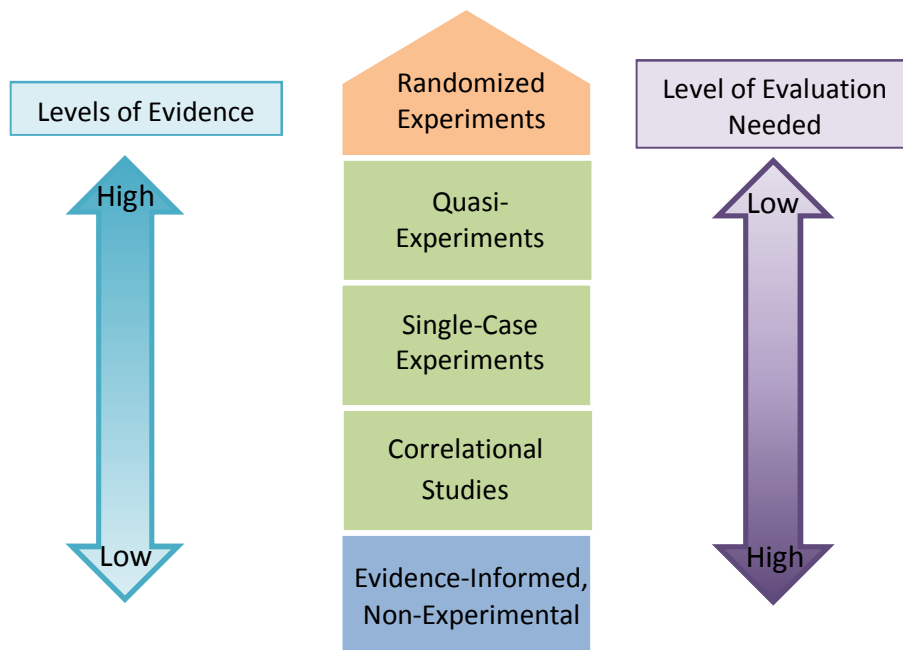
A Model for Decision-Making Based on Evidence

- Evidence-based is a process, not an intervention, to guide decisions

EVIDENCE TERM	DESCRIPTION	PROS	CONS	LEVEL OF EVALUATION NEEDED*
Evidence-Based	A randomized control group that may or may not be replicated	Strong indication that the program caused the change	Cannot always be applicable or comparable to desired population	Low
Research-Based	Compares outcomes for a group that had access to a practice with those who did not but are similar on observable characteristics	More flexible than evidence-based	May have causal influences but can't be confident results are not due to other contributing factors	Medium
Promising	Practices that are consistent with theory and knowledge about early childhood practices but there is little evidence-based research to determine whether they work	In a domain that lacks a lot of evidence-based research, these allow responses to community needs, and include innovative ideas in doing so	Little to no evidence of the efficacy of the practice	High
Mixed Results	Practices which have been shown not to work in some cases but have been shown to work in another case	Opportunity not to exclude something that could work in a particular situation	There is evidence that it doesn't work	Extremely High
Ineffective	Practices which have been proven not to work	Can exclude these practices from receiving resources		Not advised for funding

*If a known model is being used with the intended population and maintaining fidelity to the model, then the level of evaluation needed is lower. The more a practice moves away from that, the higher the level of evaluation is needed.

METHODS OF EVALUATION



Graphic adapted from "Research Hierarchies," by Allen Rubin (2008) and "Becoming Evidence-Based: What Does it Take" by Child Trends (2010)