

Continuity of Care Proposal

Catch 22 for low-income parents: To work, they need child care, BUT to get child care subsidies, they must have a job. “Continuity of Care” is currently funded by Travis County to enable children of low-income parents to enter or remain in *high quality child care* for up to 90 days during gaps in subsidy eligibility while parents search for a job.

Parent: Has job → → Job search → → → → → → → → Enters new job
Child care: Federal subsidy → Fed subsidy 28 days → Continuity 62 days → Fed subsidy

Parent: Job training → → Job search → → → Enters new job
Child care: Federal subsidy → Continuity 90 days → Fed subsidy

Parent: Job search → → Enters new job
Child care: Continuity 90 days → Federal subsidy

Continuity of Care Funding serves two generations to break the cycle of poverty. It

- Promotes family self-sufficiency enabling parents to get and keep *good jobs*
- Maximizes return on investment in job training
- Promotes child development and school readiness by providing *high quality* child care
- Promotes child well-being by reducing disruptions in child care
- Enables teen parents to stay in school
- Leverages federal funding, which provides subsidies when parent has a job

County Currently Supports Program

Travis County funds the program (\$500,000 the first year FY2014; \$235,758 per year through FY2020). Served 453 families in 2014-15, about 36 families at any one time. Average cost per family = \$1624.00

Families are diverse

46% Hispanic or Latino; 40% Black or African-American

Pilot project for “up front” subsidies (parents completing job training or needing job)

Served 75 families; 63 (84%) found jobs

Average time to find a job = 70 days

Average time using program = 70 days

Average cost per day per child = \$23.84

The demand great. In a 2-year period, 3268 children faced termination of subsidies because of ineligibility. Approximately 1500 families are on waiting list for subsidies.

\$500,000 per year from the City of Austin would almost triple the number of families served.

Is Scalable

The number of families served depends on the amount of funding available. Any increases in funding permit additional families to be served.

Logistics

- Parents must meet eligibility requirements for federally-funded subsidies, with the exception that teen parents are not required to meet the income eligibility requirement.
- Child care must be high quality; that is, it must meet the quality standards of the Texas Rising Star System.
- A full-time “navigator” monitors use, refers clients to sources of employment and training, and refers clients to quality child care settings.

Background

If parents with low incomes lose a job or encounter administrative glitches, their federally-supported child care subsidies end after 28 days, creating disruption in the family and in the child’s life. When parents finish job training, their federal subsidies end immediately.

- The Continuity of Care program helps families to help themselves by bridging the gaps created by job instability and enabling parents to find and maintain employment.
- It promotes children’s development by assuring that children get the continuous experience in high quality early education that promotes school readiness. It is well-established from research that early education is critically important for children’s success in school and in life. Our goal is to provide at least two years of early education prior to school entry.

Program fits goals of **School Readiness Action Plan** and **Two-Generation** – both endorsed by the Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners.

Submitted by City of Austin Early Childhood Council to Health and Human Services Subcommittee, Austin City Council, 10/14/15.