



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Early Childhood Council

20260311-002: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Recommendations for Current Early Childhood Investments

WHEREAS, in the City of Austin, 30% of children under age 6 live in households with low income; and

WHEREAS, 94% of the children in households with low income under age 6 are children of color; and

WHEREAS, decades of research proves that disadvantages begin the moment children come into the world because children born into poverty and children of color are disproportionately born early, at low weight, or with chronic illnesses, and are less likely than their peers to be ready for, or successful at school; and

WHEREAS, current City investments in early childhood programs align with the goals and strategies of the City's Quality of Life Study for Austin's Families with Young Children, which found that 78% of caregivers surveyed experienced some difficulty paying for child care in the last 12 months; the GenATX initiative from the Office of the Mayor; the recently launched Infrastructure Academy; Raising Travis County, the voter-approved fund to increase access to early care and education and to afterschool programming; and the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Strategic Plan, a data-driven community strategic plan designed to build more efficient and coordinated systems for quality childcare and childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, these existing commitments rely on sustained partnerships through social service agreements with Austin area providers, experts, and educators who provide preventative support, foster joint partnerships to enhance coordination, improve wraparound support, save public dollars and interventions over the long term, and increase access to funding and resources that may not be available to individuals; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin issued budget cuts of 10% across-the-board to social service agreements for FY 2026; and there is another \$16.8 million in projected cuts to social service programs in FY 2027; additionally, federal, state, and local economic recovery funds invested in early childhood programs have concluded; and

WHEREAS, there are over 6,500 children on the Child Care Scholarship Waitlist administered through Workforce Solutions Capital Area; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council recommends that the City of Austin maintain all current investments, contracts, and maintenance agreements in early childhood programs and infrastructure, including but not limited to:

- Maintain funding for contracts related to services for families and children within Austin Public Health and Austin Economic Development, as detailed below. These contracted services provide targeted, proven preventive measures for families with young children, reducing the need for more costly interventions later. *(List #1-10)*
- Maintain funding for public service child care service contracts funded through Federal HUD-CDBG funds that support parenting teens and Early Head Start *(List #11-12)*
- Maintain funding for current city programs related to childcare and children's services, which have a proven track record of strengthening child care programs and providing preventative supports for families with young children. *(List #13-16)*
- Maintain the APH and AED staffing budget for critical staff who oversee childhood programs and services
- If the City Manager creates a comprehensive rubric tool to assess future funding for the City's existing social service contracts, the rubric should consider the following:
 - Child care, early childhood development, and early intervention supports.
 - Conduct regular community engagement and public feedback sessions with social service providers, child care providers, social service program participants, and community stakeholders to understand and identify community priorities and develop the comprehensive rubric and social service contract restructuring plan to maximize service impact.

Maintain Funding Levels for the Following:

Contracts Related to Service for Families and Children through Austin Public Health (APH)

List #	Organization/Agency	Program Name	Description	FY 2027 Funding Request	Department
1	Any Baby Can	Ready Families Collaborative	A comprehensive pipeline of services for children ages 0-5 and their families, which allows for early and progressive intervention in support of healthy child development	\$1,547,641	APH
2	Todos Juntos	Early Childhood Education Program	The initiative, Mi Familia & Me, integrates the early care and education program to provide parenting classes to build a parent's capacity to support healthy brain development, peer-to-peer support, and access to critical resources, and nurturing parent/child bonds.	\$575,264	APH
3	VinCare Services of Austin	Quality Care for Children Overcoming Homelessness	Provides extremely low-income single mothers and their children who have experienced homelessness access to direct care, parenting education, and wraparound support services.	\$86,640	APH
4	Austin Child Guidance Center	Infant & Early Childhood Services (IEC)	ICE promotes school readiness and improves the social and emotional health of at-risk lower-income children while reducing the rate of suspensions and expulsions of children ages zero to five years old.	\$131,632	APH
5	Local Area School Districts	Pre-K Classroom Startup Costs	Start-up costs for area school districts to purchase furniture and materials to open an additional Pre-K3 classroom.	\$115,200	APH

Contracts Related to Service for Families and Children through Austin Economic Development (AED)

List #	Organization/Agency	Program Name	Description	FY 2027 Funding Request
6	Workforce Solutions Capital Area Workforce Board	Quality Childcare Collaborative (QC3)	Programming to increase childcare quality, including Director Mentoring, CLASS Training, and the Jeannette Watson Wage Supplement Program; Temporary "bridge" funding for children in subsidized childcare who would otherwise be terminated or not enrolled due to federal funding rules.	\$1,006,389
7	KinderCare	Maintenance and Operations Agreement for KinderCare at Bergstrom Tech	Rent and operating expenses (OpEx) for childcare program on City-leased property at Bergstrom Technology Center	\$290,968
8	RISE Child Development Center	Childcare for Black Mothers	RISE will provide free or low-cost, short-term, culturally congruent, high-quality drop-in childcare, for Black mothers who are a part of the Black Mama's Village in Central Texas for children 6 weeks through age 5. Drop-in care is a back-up childcare option for parents when they need temporary, short-term care	\$122,514
9	Mainspring Schools	Mainspring Magic Quality Improvement Project	This program expands the training and professional development opportunities offered to teachers to enable them to build skills and expertise in areas aligned with the three pillars of Mainspring's successful model - Innovative Learning, Health & Wellness, and the Whole Family Approach	\$61,200

10	Ginsberg Kershner & Associates	Early Childhood Consulting	Childcare consulting services	\$75,000
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Public Service Childcare Services Contracts with Federal HUD-CDBG Funds through APH

List #	Organization/Agency	Program Name	Description	FY 2027 Funding Request	Department
11	Child Inc.	Early Head Start	Early Head Start child care for children of families with low-income	\$414,830	APH
12	Austin Independent School District	Teen Parent Childcare	Child care services for children on teen parents with low-income	\$343,478	APH

Current City Programs Related to Child Care and Children's Services

List #	Program Name	Description	FY 2027 Funding Request	Department
13	Year two implementation comprehensive support network and resource hub for home-based childcare providers	The network aims for equitable access to information and resources focused on: Childcare Quality, Business & Sustainability, Comprehensive Services, and Provider Well-Being. The City's match will cover a portion of the costs of a new financial relief grant program for qualifying home-based childcare providers	\$75,000	AED
14	High-quality child care fee waivers	Funding to waive fees for qualifying high quality childcare programs to: (1) obtain a conditional use permit to open a childcare facility; (2) construct an expansion of an existing high quality childcare facility; and (3) obtain an annual inspection by the Austin Fire Department for a high quality childcare facility. All to reduce cost burden on essential child care providers	\$250,000	AED

15	Maternal Infant Outreach Program	Services for African American women with low income during pregnancy and throughout the first year postpartum, including health education, resource navigation assistance, one-on-one home visits, birth education, and labor and delivery support	\$567,428	APH
16	Family Connects	Universal Home Visiting Program	\$1,081,800	APH

Date of Approval: March 11, 2026

Motioned By: Member Freeland

Seconded By: Member McNary

Vote: 9-0

For: Vice Chair Menard and Members Freeland, Latham-Sikes, McCollum, McIlwain, McNary, Navarro, Sears, and Rivas

Against: None

Abstain: Member Alvizo abstained; Chair Hamilton recused

Off the dais: None

Absent: Member Cárdenas

Attest:



Caitlin Oliver-McLaughlin, staff liaison