

Alison Middleton

From: Kristen Ryder <kmryder80@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 20, 2021 10:46 AM
To: Rick Robbins; Debra Rushton; Will Bunek; Ty Wessell; Patricia Soutas-Little; Gwenne Allgaier; Melinda Lautner; Board of Commissioners; Clerk
Subject: Parenting Communities millage-Public Comment
Attachments: 9 18 21 LC BOC letter of support for Parenting Communities KRyder.pdf
Categories: Yellow Category

Good morning, Leelanau County Clerk and Board of Commissioners,

As a constituent of Leelanau County District 5, I have attached a letter of support for the Early Childhood Initiative/Parenting Communities program and ask that the current board stand with the voices of the voters in Leelanau County.

Thank you,
Kristen Ryder

Kristen Ryder, District 5
2000 E. Narlock Rd
Cedar, MI 49621
September 18, 2021

Leelanau County Board of Commissioners

Re: Support of Early Childhood services via Parenting Communities

Dear Leelanau County Board of Commissioners:

I am writing to you to voice my support for the continuation of millage funding for the Parenting Communities program, which provides our families with access to evidence-based services.

For the past thirteen years, I have practiced as a Michigan Certified School Psychologist, spending time in both public education and public nonprofit Community Mental Health (CMH) programs and services. During my time in CMH, one of my roles was a consulting School Psychologist for Early On programs. Additionally, I was a research assistant for Early Childhood and Parenting programs. I've worked alongside regional community members to increase community awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and I study the impacts of childhood trauma on developing brains, both at Butler University (Applied Educational Neuroscience) and Michigan State University (Medical Neuroscience and Clinical Social Work). For almost twenty years, through both public education and community nonprofit work, I have been in service to at-risk youth, children with disabilities, and their families.

The Parenting Communities program utilizes two evidence-based intervention programs: Strengthening Families and Parents as Teachers. These programs have been evaluated for their effectiveness (SF since the 1980's, with emphasis on families who struggle with court involvement and substance dependency) and have shown to decrease risk factors for their clients.

- *Strengthening Families Research:*
 - "This study examines reunification outcomes of children of alcohol or other drug involved parents who were placed in foster care and received the Strengthening Families Program as part of their child welfare service intervention. Strengthening Families participants had a significantly higher reunification rate than matched families who did not receive this intervention...Strengthening Families Program participants were significantly more likely to reunify than comparison cases" (Brook et al., 2012)

- *Parents as Teachers (PAT) Research:*
 - “Findings indicated that compared to the non-PAT control group, the PAT student group performed better in terms of reading and math achievement and had a significantly lower rate of absenteeism, in-school-suspensions, and out-of-school-suspension. Further, PAT parents showed increased scores on parenting measures at post-test relative to pre-test. Taken together, findings indicate that participation in the PAT program is a viable means for improving child academic outcomes and school behavior and improving parenting behavior.” (Lahti et al., 2019)
 - “...There is little evidence that a short course of parenting classes that provide information about child development, or one to two home visits per year, produce measurable gains in child cognitive or pre-academic skills above and beyond the effects of direct preschool experiences. Alternatively, more-intensive interventions through one or more home visits per month (in contrast to less frequent interactions between program staff and parents), and that include active learning for parents, were associated with substantially larger positive impacts of preschool programs on children's cognitive performance. This latter finding is particularly worthy of serious consideration for children who exhibit limited gains from early education alone.” (Grindall et al., 2016)
 - “The Parents as Teachers model requires that affiliates offer a minimum of 12 home visits annually to families with one or no high-needs characteristics. Affiliates must offer a minimum of 24 home visits annually to families with two or more high-needs characteristics. Home visits last a minimum of 60 minutes” (US Dept of Health and Human Services, 2019)

Services provided via the Leelanau County Early Childhood Initiative’s Parenting Communities program:

- Playgroups
- Home Visits
- Health Resources
- Parent Education Events

During my time working for the Early On program, aside from providing in-home evaluations to families, we acted as community resource liaisons and frequently referred our clients to community programs that increased exposure to social play and connection to community, which is especially important for children in rural areas. Taken from *Early On* research, Child and Family Outcomes of early intervention:

- Child outcome indicators include infants and toddlers **who demonstrate improvement in:**
 - Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)

- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication); and
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs
- Family outcome indicators include responses from families participating in *Early On* who report that early intervention services have helped their family:
 - Know their rights;
 - Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
 - Help their children develop and learn.

Educational leaders within our community who voiced their support for the Early Childhood Initiative and submitted letters in 2019:

- Superintendents from the following districts: Suttons Bay Public Schools, Glen Lake Community School, Leland Public School, Northport Public School

I ask that you consider the needs of all families in our community, consider the impact of access to evidence-based Early Childhood interventions and supports, and continue to fund the Parenting Communities program through the millage that was voted upon and passed by your county constituents.

Thank you for your time,



Kristen Ryder, District 5 Resident

References

- Brook, J., McDonald, T. P., & Yan, Y. (2012). An analysis of the impact of the Strengthening Families Program on family reunification in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 691-695. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.12.018>
- Grindal, T., Bowne, J. B., Yoshikawa, H., Schindler, H. S., Duncan, G. J., Magnuson, K., & Shonkoff, J. P. (2016). The added impact of parenting education in early childhood education programs: A meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 70, 238–249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2016.09.018>
- Lahti, M., Evans, C. B. R., Goodman, G., Schmidt, M. C., & LeCroy, C. W. (2019). Parents as Teachers (PAT) home-visiting intervention: A path to improved academic outcomes, school behavior, and parenting skills. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 99, 451–460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.01.022>