



NUMBER 740+ youth/families

INCOME Most qualify for free/reduced lunch

PROGRAMS

- African American student support
- Circles of Support and temporary host homes
- Virtual family circles with faith communities
- Outreach in faith-based cultural communities
- Youth law project with cultural communities
- Hmong youth suicide prevention

ALL agencies reported that their grant funded project supported the following objectives:

- ✓ increased youth strengths
- ✓ encouraged healthy relationship building
- ✓ provided youth supports or connected youth to supports
- ✓ provided youth opportunities or connected youth to opportunities
- ✓ improved youth mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ improved "whole-family" wellbeing

2020 Innovative Services & Committee Outreach Grants

- 75% or greater improvement in Emotional Symptoms and Behavioral Problems or Self Harm (African American Student Support grant)
- 75% or greater improvement in Parent/Caregiver Resource Connections and Access to Concrete Supports/Tools (Circles of Support grant)

Leslie



PROBLEM/CHALLENGE

Leslie has three children. She also has a medical condition that resulted in paraplegia and kidney failure. The children’s father died in 2017. Leslie needs frequent hospital care but she has little support. Leslie and her children were struggling with depression. Her middle child has Autism.

INTERVENTION

Leslie’s home health aide referred her to Safe Families.

IMPACT

With funding from RCCMHC, Leslie’s new Circle of Support was able to spend time with the children fishing, playing games and hosting as-needed. They helped Leslie with emotional support, planning and everyday needs such as

paperwork, picking up medicine or driving kids. They used the RCCMHC website for resource navigation and helped her complete the RCCMHC “All in One Place” Family Care Binder.

When Leslie was rushed to the hospital on December 23, her Circle of Support coordinated with a family friend to host the children and visited daily with resources for three weeks. Later, they helped Leslie with end of life planning. They also supported her to repair her relationship with her brother and father. This resulted in the children having a future home with family.

Leslie now has a plan and a larger network in place. The children did not go into foster care. They are thriving in spite of their circumstances and they and know that they are loved by a greater community.

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2020 FUNDING AREA: Innovative Services & Committee Outreach Grants

TOTAL AWARDS: \$ 90,475 **TOTAL USED:** \$ 83,015 Due to COVID, one Committee Outreach grant was unable to be used. The Board approved the Cultural Outreach Committee to re-allocate the funds to a new agency and that grant was extended until 2021. Another Committee Outreach grant was not able to expend funds in 2020 so the Board extended their grant until 2021.

TOTAL SERVED: 741 youth/ families in 2020 and approximately 80 youth/families across 2020-2021 (50 youth/families carryover from a 2019-2020 grant were already reported in 2019 and not included in this number.)

GRANTEES: Metro Social Services, Safe Families, Progressive Individual Resources, Mid MN Legal Aid, and True Thao Counseling

FUNDING AREA DESCRIPTION: Innovative Services awards support and identify effective practices that address existing or emerging mental health issues for youth and/or families in Ramsey County. These include 1) new models and practices- inventive or novel approaches which are not commonly in use and 2) traditional healing practices- community defined approaches which may already be in use by certain communities or cultures but are not commonly used by public systems. Committee Outreach grants support the efforts of the RCCMHC Cultural Outreach and Advisory Council to collaborate with faith communities and cultural communities to support youth mental health outreach and suicide prevention. These committees selected four agencies to receive one-time only awards ranging in size from \$1,000 to \$2,400.

PROGRAMS: Innovative Services programs included 1) an African American student support and 2) new Circles of Support Coordination in Ramsey County. Committee Outreach grants included 1) Virtual family circles with faith communities, 2) Culturally sensitive youth mental health outreach in faith-based communities, 3) Youth law project with cultural communities, and 4) Youth suicide prevention in the Hmong community.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Most grantees served "whole families."

ETHNICITY:

African American Student Support: African American/Black youth and families

Circles of Support: African, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black/ African American, Immigrant, Latino/a, Native American or Alaskan Native, White/Caucasian

Committee Outreach: 3 out of 4 awards were specifically to support the Hmong, Latino, Refugee, and African American communities.

COLLABORATION & PROGRESS: Grantee agencies reported that they collaborated with RCCMHC through marketing their services, trainings, committees/ task groups, resource fairs and events, and referrals.

INCOME: Not all agencies collected this data. Of those who did, all agencies indicated their clients were low income/ qualified for free and reduced-price school meals.

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REFERRALS:

African American Student Support

Referrals largely came through existing clients who showed higher behavioral/conduct concerns in school settings and were identified in partnership with SPPS as needing extra support.

Circles of Support

Most were self-referrals who had heard about the program from Ramsey County, RCCMHC or SRFC.

OUTREACH TO TRADITIONALLY MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS & UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES: Most agencies who received Innovative or Committee Outreach grants were selected because they are culturally-specific and have deep ties to the cultural communities they serve.

Circles of Support

Safe Families contracted with RCCMHC with a goal of growing a diverse staff and group of volunteers to serve Ramsey County. Much of this was achieved in 2020. We hired a BIPOC coordinator who has close ties to the African American and Latino faith communities. We intentionally recruited 7 black family coaches to represent the population we serve. We met monthly with NAACP. We presented at many churches serving BIPOC families, we developed relationships with 8 churches and several non-profits that include mentoring agencies, and those on the collaborative. We have made several changes to our program that resulted in great success of engaging BIPOC volunteers and churches. We evolved our volunteer model to bridge gaps of unity and relational equity between St. Paul and Suburban Ramsey County faith communities. This allows us to offer multiple volunteers from multiple backgrounds who come together to wrap around each family. This strengthens unity in the greater community and builds community for our families.

UNSHELTERED/HOMELESS or UNACCOMPANIED MINORS:

African American Student Support: none

Circles of Support: some

Committee Outreach:

AT RISK FOR MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS:

African American Student Support: most

Circles of Support: all

Committee Outreach:

GRANTEE DATA COLLECTION: Most grantees reported using interviews and observation.

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IMPACT:

African American Student Support (10 served)

- 75% or greater improvement in Emotional Symptoms and Behavioral Problems or Self Harm.
- School attendance struggled at the start of COVID. In the summer we were able to maintain attendance with those that did summer programs, but in the fall the attendance was significantly better overall.
- There was a lot of conflict at the start of COVID with the move to stay at home in relation to relationship in school and at home. However in the last quarter we saw a significant level of calm and improvement from the crises that were happening at the start and into the early summer. With the number of meetings in individual and small groups increasing tension at home decreased. There was more opportunity to process current events and life skills.
- We were able to coach and educate clients not only through a pandemic but also educate them on the George Floyd killing and the riots that followed. We were able help give a positive perspective on law enforcement and how to deal with officers . We were able to restore trust within young African American boys who see police officers in their neighborhoods every day. We practiced role play scenarios on how to respond in crisis situations with police officers. Clients were able to get perspective of the importance of their actions and police officers within the community.

Circles of Support (213 served)

- 100% of our families indicated an increase in social supports
- 75% or greater improvement in Parent/Caregiver Resource Connections and Access to Concrete Supports or Tangible Tools.
- Our program is free and voluntary. We offered online Healing Circles, basic needs deliveries, rides for medication/basic needs during civil unrest, respite, resilience coaching and parent support, resource navigation, temporary host homes as-needed.
- The greatest accomplishment throughout our work last year was implementing the eco map of relationships. We watched as family after family repaired their relationships with their extended family and addressed social isolation. Often, this prevented youth from entering the foster care system.

Committee Outreach (518 served)

- Our program had a positive impact on youth mental health by increasing awareness of and promoting newly acquired knowledge about youth mental health without being dismissive of their longstanding cultural beliefs and formulate their inclusion in an appropriate referral process.
- We empowered participants through increased information and knowledge to recognize symptoms of youth mental health disorders.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES:

- We found strength in our coaching. In particular we were pleased with the effectiveness of using the relational map from the Center for Social Policy 5 Protective Factors.
- New African Immigrants pose different and often even more complex challenges to the traditional mental health service delivery and many providers are not equipped to meet those challenges. PIRI understands that cultures vary from clan to clan and we apply cultural methods of mutual health supports for the new immigrant groups. It is best practice to serve the whole-family.

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CHALLENGES, OBSTACLES, NEEDS & GAPS

- Being able to track an effective variable to track students progression within the program. Upon filling out the grant we chose increasing attendance at school to decrease behavior referrals and suspensions while at school. We recognized that referrals and suspensions correlated hand and hand with school to prison pipeline. We attempted to track distance learning attendance but there was a variety of issues. Clients had poor internet connections, parents weren't computer inclined, disruptive/distracting settings and etc. Grades stayed relatively the same however we wanted to note that due to Distance learning the grading of student were a lot different and the level of engagement requires was a lot different. Distance learning worked very well for some and others it was extremely difficult. Also due the COIVD's impact suspensions were at zero since the youth did not go to school and no one was reported for truancy or was involved in the criminals justice system out in the community.
- Getting parents to meet for educational/informational purposes via zoom. Parents would agree to Zoom meetings but would forget or not attend.
- There is a need to continue to equip, inform and educate families and community leaders on African Immigrant/Refugee youth Mental Health Literacy which could play an important role in addressing youth mental health disparity and stigma reduction which is a vital component of this Mental Health
- There is an URGENT NEED for crisis response homes- we need to train our volunteers to respond to youth in crisis/ youth with higher behavior needs. This seems to be even higher since COVID.
- The intense season of Covid 19 caused us to constantly realign and recruiting new volunteers was very challenging in the past year.
- There was a stark increase in the number of families needing longer term support for emotional wellness Further, the demands on our volunteers (and subsequently our team) to step into navigating resources for basic needs required more partnerships and more education. Distance learning challenges also forced an increase in parents needing support. In turn, we pivoted to find the resources and support systems to help the families' needs. Our typical request for hosting a child then supporting the family through follow up went out the window and we found 90% of the families calling in needed the wraparound support long before they needed a hosting. We acclimated and trained the volunteers to meet this shift. We also recognized the need to keep our coaching process in place but be able to respond quicker, which we continue to improve. This is a dynamic that is unique to Ramsey County as there are many more crisis calls.

ALIGNMENT WITH RCCMHC's STRATEGIC PLAN

ALL agencies reported that their grant funded project supported the following RCCMHC objectives:

- ✓ increased youth strengths (awareness, empowerment etc.)
- ✓ encouraged healthy relationship building
- ✓ provided youth supports or connected youth to supports
- ✓ provided youth opportunities or connected youth to opportunities
- ✓ improved youth mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ improved "whole-family" wellbeing

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OTHER STORIES

African American Student Support

- Clients looked forward to meals that were purchased during group session. A lot of the students would say that it was their first time eating and it would be early afternoon. Clients cooperation and even focusing ability seem to increase on full stomachs compared to empty ones.
- Family members of the clients vocalized appreciation towards MHP for taking clients out on activities. Clients was able to practice on coping skills and social skills within a COVID 19 awareness friendly environment. MHP was able was able to provide 10 boys with PPE and masks for their family. The clients were able to talk about their anxiety and fears on how to cope with the pandemic. We supported clients to recognize activities and resources they could utilize instead sitting in the house.
- One client was able to obtain a job at Burger King through role play scenarios and coaching on life skills, interview expectations and the applications process.
- MHP also worked with school personnel and teachers to help keep students on track during transition to distance learning. MHP acted as a mentor/ tutor to help clients comprehend assignments and the new virtual process. MHP was able to help students connect to google meet meetings and answer questions from concerned parents.