



August 17, 2023

DuPage County Board
421 N. County Farm Road
Wheaton, IL 60187

Dear DuPage County Board Members,

The Community House respectfully submits this funding request to provide increased trauma informed, family systems based mental health services to young people and their families living in an unincorporated area of Willowbrook in DuPage County. For more than 80 years, The Community House, a community based non-profit organization, has provided programs and services designed to help individuals and families live remarkable lives and build healthy communities through access to day care and recreation opportunities, programs in the arts, and high-quality sliding scale mental health services. For nearly 30 years, The Community House has provided programming and services targeted to the unincorporated and under resourced area of Willowbrook focused on improving the quality of life for residents in the key areas of:

- **After School Care and Summer Camp:** These vitally important programs provide education support focused on strengthening literacy, career exploration, social emotional wellness curriculum, financial education, and experiential learning in the critical non-school hours to allow working parents the opportunity to maintain employment. Our programs include collaboration with multiple other non-profit and public agencies including School District 180, Indian Prairie Library, People's Resource Center, Metro Family Services, Hinsdale Rotary Club, Northern Illinois Food Bank, Willowbrook-Burr Ridge Chamber, Economic Awareness Council, and more.
- **Youth Recreation and Community Events:** The Community House has led and/or collaborated to bring community celebrations to strengthen community bonds and relationships; including Fall Fest and Halloween Costume Giveaway, Christmas Parade, Easter Egg Hunt, Back to School Bash, Black History Celebration, Mother's Day Dinner and more. In the past year, we expanded to serve nearly 100 children in programs including soccer and tennis programming, babysitter certification, and more. We are launching an expanded recreation listing for residents in fall 2023 with subsidized pricing to make participation accessible to all families.
- **Mental Health Resources:** Our relationship with this community started with our Counseling Center after tragic violence in the 1990's. Through providing dedicated social work staff officed in the community, The Community House has provided individual and

group therapy to residents on a sliding scale; eliminating the barriers of transportation and cost. In addition to individual therapy, our services have included social emotional education and group therapy integrated into our after-school program and summer camp.

The Community House is committed to making a difference in the lives of families in this community and is asking for your consideration of support to deepen our impact.

Why Our Work is Needed

The roughly 3,800 residents of this unincorporated area of Willowbrook represent the lowest income census tracts in the county. 34% of residents live at or below 200% poverty levels as determined by county measurements and the median household income is 60% lower than the rest of the county. Due to this area being unincorporated and its isolated location bordered by multi-lane highways and forest preserves, it is also under resourced and lacks access to amenities most suburban areas offer like park district programming, walkable parks, and access to grocery stores. The demographics of this area are African American (66.7%), Hispanic (12.6%), and Caucasian (10%); meaning the majority of residents have experienced challenges due to systemic barriers making accessing services challenging.

Studies find that children who face significant adverse childhood experiences (ACES) such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, or poverty are at a higher risk for heart disease, cancer, or other illnesses later in life. Addressing these experiences early on and providing a solid foundation upon which children can develop and grow can help break the cycle of abuse and poverty and can lead to improved health outcomes across generations.

According to Illinois Report Card, the chronic absenteeism rate in District 180 is 43.8% with 27.5% of students missing 5 percent or more school days per year without a valid excuse. While school officers tasked with addressing truant students exist in both Anne M Jeans Elementary School and Burr Ridge Middle School, they're over capacity with the number of students not returning to school, which has only heightened after the pandemic. Collectively, these statistics tell the story of a community in need of increased access to services.

The 2021 Mental Health Index, created by Conduent Healthy Communities Institute, is a measure of socioeconomic and health factors correlated with self-reported poor mental health. According to this index, 60527 (Willowbrook) has the highest need for mental health at 53.2 (Index value from 0 (low need) to 100 (high need)).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health symptoms have emerged or intensified due to the traumatizing effects it has had on our youth. There is an ongoing demand for not only mental wellness and case management services but for accessible and affordable services as well.

Our Community Based Mental Health Service Plan

The requested funds will support the increased provision of trauma-informed mental health services and case management for the immediate mental health care needs of low-income/underinsured youth and young adults in the unincorporated area of Willowbrook located in DuPage County. Funding will be used to:

- Provide trauma-informed individual, group, and family therapy utilizing evidenced based interventions by clinically licensed professionals.
- Conduct support groups for children, adolescents, and their parents.
- Provide case management services to strategically connect residents to resources.

Many of the residents of the neighborhood are underinsured with no mental health insurance coverage or have no insurance at all. In focus groups we hosted in 2021, mental health resources for young people were among the top two desired services the community sought. This funding will provide trauma informed, mental health counseling through individual and groups sessions and will be administered in 3 ways; from walkable offices located within the community, from school-based sessions in collaboration with School District 180 and School District 86, and during our after school and summer camp programs. By offering services from a walkable location, available for students on-site during school hours or during programming they are already attending, we are eliminating the barrier of transportation and by providing our services on an income based sliding scale, we are eliminating the barrier of cost. In addition to individual and group therapy, we plan to provide case management services to clients to connect them to immediate resources. Implementation would also include support group services to youth and their families.

The funding will increase the availability of mental wellness services to those impacted directly or indirectly by the COVID-19 pandemic. These services will help reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, impulse control, trauma, etc. that may have arisen or been made worse by the pandemic. Our therapeutic, case management, and support groups will help to ensure families feel supported, safe, heard, and cared for.

Building Trust in the Community

For nearly 30 years, The Community House has partnered with families in the neighborhood to provide childcare, community events, and mental wellness services. The community trusts us with their most important resource, their children, nearly every single day of the year, through the after-school program and summer camp. Our programming resonates throughout the community and we intentionally take efforts to hire from within the community for our programs. As a founding member of the Willowbrook Corner Coalition, and leader/co-facilitator of the Coalition for most of its existence, we are uniquely positioned to continue serving families through increased mental health services.

The Coalition of agencies working to improve lives in the community include:

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, Metropolitan Family Services, Indian Prairie Library, MECCA Center, Pillars, CCSD180, DuPage County Board District 3, Literacy DuPage, PTO, Kindercare-Willowbrook, Avanath, DuPage County Health Department, HCS Family Services Food Pantry, and The Community House.

A key partner to ensure basic needs of community residents are met, includes the YWCA. The in-home visits provided by the YWCA and our mental health access have an important interplay to provide wrap-around services for struggling families. The families served through in-home visits by the YWCA are also families more likely to need access to intensive mental health services; and vice versa. Our ability to directly coordinate services for families in a way that includes a warm handoff from one organization's staff to another, and not simply sending someone to an intake line or long waitlist, will be a great benefit to residents.

Impact of Services

The requested funds will support the increased provision of trauma-informed mental health services and case management for the immediate mental health care needs of low-income/underinsured youth and young adults in the Willowbrook Community located in DuPage County. Funding will be used to:

- Provide trauma-informed individual, group, and family therapy utilizing evidence-based interventions.
- Conduct support groups for children, adolescents, and their parents.
- Provide case management services to residents that strategically connect them to needed resources.

We expect this role to provide:

- An average of 20 healing sessions of therapy per week, equating to approximately 80 sessions per month, or 960 annually.
- Intensive case management for clients.
- The provision of individual or group therapy to at least 80 clients during the year.

Measuring Success

The Community House measures client success and would be prepared to share the number of unique clients served, session counts and anonymous aggregate client assessment data with the Board, including:

- Bi-annual anonymous satisfaction surveys to assess client experience with the *services*.
- Those clients who receive Solutions-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy will receive pre and post assessments which will provide empirical qualitative data.

Spending Plan

This funding will be used to fund the costs associated with adding an additional Licensed Social Worker/Licensed Professional Counselor or Licensed Clinical Social Worker/Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor to be dedicated to serving this specific geographic community. To aid in the sustainability of this role, we are requesting consideration of a 3-year term for this funding.

While the hiring landscape for qualified staff has been challenging in the post-pandemic environment for social workers, in the past quarter we have seen a change in the hiring pool. In the past 60 days, The Community House has hired 2 full-time therapists, including one dedicated to this community through the DuPage Transformational Grant, and through that process we have identified a candidate that would be offered this role, if funding is approved.

Cost	Amount
Clinician Salary:	\$65,000
Taxes, Health Benefits:	\$18,000
Weekly Clinical Supervision Cost:	\$4,000
Administrative Cost:	\$8,000
Total Annual Request:	\$95,000
Total 3-Year Funding Request:	\$285,000

Sustainability

After the initial 3-year funding from the County, The Community House would be prepared to independently fund the continuation of this role through Community and Family Foundation support, through individual donations, and potentially through the addition of billing Medicaid.

Closing

The Community House, through partnerships with the County and YWCA can make a measurable difference in the lives of families living in this community. Through shared resources and collaborative programming and services, our impact is multiplied, and we can have a deeper impact on families than any individual agency on their own. The effects of the pandemic on young people and their families are significant, ongoing, and need to be addressed. The need for access to services to help prepare young people for future success is attainable if organizations can collaborate to provide wrap-around support to struggling families. This proposal, combined with the important services offered by the YWCA, can make that difference. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Janowick, Executive Director

Luke Goodwin, Chair, Board of Trustees