



601 West Liberty
Wheaton, Illinois 60187
www.dupagepads.org

DuPagePads
The Solution to End Homelessness.

July 25, 2023

DuPage County
C/O Mary Keating, Director of Community Services
421 N. County Farm Rd.
Wheaton, IL 60187

Dear Mary,

On behalf of the more than 300 people—including 100 children—receiving emergency shelter through DuPagePads, I want to thank you and our County Board so much for your support of our work. I write to you today to ask that the Board consider a request in the amount of \$194,183.20 to fully fund our organization's Education Specialist position through FY 2026.

This position is one that DuPagePads created last year after notification of funds available from ISBE through our Regional Office of Education. Our ROE learned from ISBE this spring that they will not receive enough from the state to offer the grant for the position after this fall, and recommended that we contact the county in order to continue to have funding for the position.

We very much wish to continue this position, because the children in our care are in great need of this type of programming. Our Education Specialist helps to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness who are attending local school districts surrounding the organization's Interim Housing Center (IHC) where they are residing with their families on the path to stable housing.

Funding will further enable DuPagePads' Education Specialist to support the Downers Grove District Homeless Liaisons, ensure students are connected with tutors and other school supports as needed, and assist families to coordinate with their respective districts to secure daily, discrete transportation to and from school for the next three years. On the day that I write this letter, we have 109 children staying with us who attend 27 different schools within our area. All of them deserve the opportunity to succeed in school, and all of them desperately want a home of their own.

It is no secret that children who experience homelessness face significant barriers to obtain education, resulting in a myriad of academic disadvantages that can disrupt their learning and negatively impact their scholastic achievement. According to the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, 1 in 30 American children will endure some form of homelessness over the course of a year. Based on population counts, this amounts to roughly 6,700 children in DuPage County alone.

Unfortunately, 23% of students experiencing homelessness must repeat a grade compared to 1.5% of their stably-housed peers. Students who are achieving below their grade levels or who are older than their classmates can be stigmatized by their peers as being inferior. This stigma, along with the traumatic experience of homelessness in general, can be overwhelming for children and can drastically impair their educational experience. When education becomes a child's enemy, their perception of its importance diminishes and they can become



less likely to pursue further education, limiting the chance of rising out of poverty as an adult.

DuPagePads envisions better and more equitable academic outcomes for the children in our care. Our youth-specific education services and programming are designed to help augment a safe, nonjudgmental and empowering environment in which youth can become more comfortable requesting assistance, building skills to increase comprehension and application of grade-appropriate proficiencies through tutoring, and learning from each other through prosocial activities.

We are grateful for the County’s support last summer that enabled the creation of our Education Specialist position to leverage resources and academic support for the increased number of children utilizing the IHC since our transition to centralized emergency housing. From August 18, 2022, to present, DuPagePads has provided emergency shelter to 164 school-aged children through the IHC. During this time, 49 children (30%) have attended school in Downers Grove Districts 58 and 99 and 21 children are currently attending school in these districts, including 8 elementary students, 7 junior high students and 6 high school students.

Ensuring that all IHC-placed students have access to after-school supports coordinated by our Education Specialist is tantamount to reducing the achievement gap and encouraging lifelong learning for our youngest guests—like Kevin*, a 2nd grader residing with his mother and three siblings at our IHC.

When Kevin first arrived here, he was achieving behind grade-level because he did not know how to read and frequently expressed defeat in completing homework. Through our Education Specialist, Kevin was quickly connected to a team of outstanding tutors who serve as teachers within a local school district and received tutoring once per week at the organization’s nearby Empowerment Center. Today, Kevin is reading books by himself and continues to make remarkable academic strides along with his siblings. His self-esteem has soared and case management staff have reported that he is better able to express his emotions, manage feelings of frustration and communicate his thoughts since first coming to the IHC.

Supporting the continued provision of needed education-specific services for the children we serve and the districts they attend will help to equip them with the tutoring, tools and strategies they need to be successful both inside and outside of their classrooms.

Specific intended allocation of needed funding is as follows:

| Education Specialist | FY 2024 | FY 2025 | FY 2026 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Salary | \$51,728.39 | \$53,280.15 | \$54,878.55 |
| Benefits | \$11,265.40 | \$11,430.40 | \$11,600.40 |
| Total | \$62,993.70 | \$64,710.55 | \$66,478.95 |

TOTAL: \$194,183.20

While this position could be housed within an entity other than us, educators in our area have recommended that it be housed within DuPagePads because the closest school districts don’t have the capacity to provide tutoring or transportation back to the IHC for children after-



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hours, and because the children staying with us are not simply within one school district but rather attend 27 different schools in our area.

We appreciate your consideration of our request to improve academic outcomes for the children in our care through needed funding of our Education Specialist. In terms of long-term viability, it is our hope, and a goal of mine, that by the end of the time period in this grant request, we will have successfully advocated with ISBE to fund positions like this across Illinois for children who are staying with shelter providers. We have multiple peer agencies in other counties in Illinois who are expressing similar concerns for the children in their care, and together we are creating a plan to advocate on their behalf.

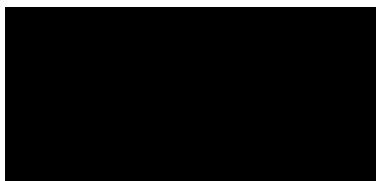
A detailed job description of this position is attached to this request.

Update on 2022 Award Balance for Hotel Stays to Prevent Death and Injury from Winter Weather

To date, the DuPagePads has expended \$196,757.93 of the county's generous \$250,000 grant to provide overflow emergency shelter rooms at local hotels during the winter months for people who present for services when the IHC is completely full, with no capacity. The current balance of this award is \$53,202.47, with an approved extension of the end date for the grant to March 2024. DuPagePads plans to utilize these funds during the coming winter to prevent death or injury from freezing for people who would otherwise be unsheltered, and anticipates fully using all funds by the end of March 2024.

I am beyond grateful for your critical support and partnership in our mission to end homelessness in DuPage County. Please reach out if you would like to receive more information or would like to come to our Empowerment Center to meet our Education Specialist and hear about her work. I can be reached at aredzic@dupagepads.org or 630-682-3846, ext. 2310.

Sincerely,



April Redzic
President & CEO