



CARES Act Gives Additional Funding for Head Start Program

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
July 8 2020 2:05 PM



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MADISON COUNTY - Riverbend Head Start and Family Services has been notified through the Office of Head Start an anticipated award of \$686,894 through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These funds will

support Head Start services to low-income children under the age of 5 in Madison County, Illinois.

Nationally, \$750 million has been designated for Head Start programs to support preventative, preparedness, and response activities related to the coronavirus through the CARES Act. To support low-income children who have experienced a disruption of services during this time, programs will provide supplemental summer Head Start programs as they are able. Funds will be released directly to all 1,600 local Head Start and Early Head Start programs, including tribal programs, in every state and territory beginning this week.

"President Trump has secured more than \$6 billion in funding to help supplement human services during this crisis," said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. "This \$750 million for Head Start will help ensure that children and families who rely on the program continue receiving services like meals, health screenings, and pre-K education where possible. As we move toward safely reopening, it only grows more important that we support vulnerable families and children whose lives have been disrupted by the virus and its economic effects."

"We know that investing in programs that use a whole family approach to learning and development can be pivotal to the success of children and families," said Lynn Johnson, assistant secretary for the Administration for Children and Families. "During this pandemic, it is important to support programs that enrich and enlighten children, families, and communities as they work towards their goals and make concentrated efforts to improve their future post the pandemic."

The Riverbend Head Start and Family Services program plans to use the CARES Act funding to provide critical support to enrolled children and families. "During this crisis, we have been able to provide crisis response to our Head Start families, including education supplies, diapers, formula, meals, mental wellness support, and connection to community resources," said Gene Howell, President and CEO of Riverbend Head Start and Family Services.

Since the pandemic, Riverbend Head Start and Family Services has scaled up their capacity to offer a virtual program experience while in person services were not an option. As the agency prepares to reunite staff and students, they will continue over the summer to provide support and resources to children and their families in various ways. Currently, the Agency is working to determine how they will best be able to support children and families get up to date on the medical, dental, and other follow-up services they need to succeed this coming school year. "The health and safety of each child in

our care is our highest priority," said Howell. "We also provide training to our staff in infectious disease management and have implemented a round the clock sanitizing, disinfecting and cleaning schedule as we prepare to reopen our programming in the fall."

Learn more about Riverbend Head Start and Family Services at www.riverbendfamilies.org. Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/RiverbendHeadStartandFamilyServices/>

Riverbend Head Start and Family Services is currently recruiting children and families for fall enrollment. Contact us at 618-463-5950.

Find additional information about Head Start programming specific to this public health crisis on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/coronavirus>

