

# MHSA F.A.S.T. GRANT (FAMILIES AND SUPPORTS TOGETHER) PROJECT BLUEPRINT

## REDWOOD COAST REGIONAL CENTER (8/1/20-6/30/23)

Redwood Coast Regional Center submitted the MHSA F.A.S.T. Grant on 2/12/20 (Pre-Covid). Shortly after the Grant was written and before it was awarded in August, Covid 19 was identified and the RCRC Team was forced to redesign our grant activities -- specifically, how to provide mental health/social emotional support services in the midst of a national health crisis. The world changed – and service delivery changed – but the goals of our project remained the same -- as Families and Supports Together became even more essential in a world-wide pandemic that proved to be a marathon and not a sprint. As the Superintendent of one of our County School Districts noted in his response to an offered Provider Academy, “Relieving Long Term Stress and Promoting Resiliency in Children, Families, and Providers”, ***“It could not have come at a better time...”***

<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Build A Team</b>	<p>To promote project success, RCRC built upon existing relationships with significant community partners such as governing authorities (receiving letters of support from our local Congress person and member of Board of Supervisors); First Five California; Family Resource Centers; Department of Public Health; California Children’s Services; Partnership; Medical and Mental Health professionals; County Behavioral Health Services; County Offices of Education and SELPAs; local Children’s Councils; Children’s Welfare Services and a network of proven vendors to collaborate and to provide effective evidence-based services to families. We established a Grant Advisory Council with a local Family Resource Center’s Committee on Health and Disabilities (CHAD) -- meeting quarterly for input and recommendations. We also networked within our own Regional Center to provide updates and make presentations to staff at their regularly scheduled Unit Meetings – with the positive outcome of utilizing gifted professionals who were willing to support our F.A.S.T. Grant goals within their areas of expertise.</p>
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Identify the Needs</b> <b>“What’s Working and What’s Not”</b>	<p>As a starting point, we built upon the foundation of California’s State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) which identified the need to increase the rate of positive social/emotional skills among infants and toddlers with disabilities through Parent and Provider Education; Professional Development; and Interagency-Collaboration. We examined our geographic region and demographics noting that our 4 rural counties include a culturally diverse population with high needs (e.g. PRE-COVID significant incidence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; pre-natal exposure to meth; and repeated years where regions experienced Federally Declared Natural disasters of Fire and Flood). Medi-Cal identified 3 of the 4 Counties we serve as “frontier areas” (uniquely challenged for providing medical care due to sparse population and limited resources).</p>

		<p>We sharpened our delivery focus during the Pandemic based on Annual Community Surveys from our Grant Advisory Council and First Five which identified emerging/exacerbating needs due to Covid such as; “emotional toll on all ages”; “need for resiliency and trauma informed trainings”; “more bi-lingual professionals”; “increase in people appearing to suffer PTSD in communities”; “limited counselling services for families with children under 5”; “increased isolation, depression, and alcoholism”; “increase in child abuse and crime”; “children’s poor academic and social-emotional performance on KEDP measures”. We identified underserved populations especially hard-hit during the Pandemic due to language, cultural distinctives, and/or technological barriers. Strengths identified in surveys included “collaboration with community entities”; “focus on health and safety”; “regular updates from Public Health”; “wrap-around services” and “Redwood Coast Regional Center.”</p>
<p><b>Step 3</b></p>	<p><b>Develop the Plan and The Partners</b></p>	<p>Our plan focused on preparing parents and professionals to collaborate, support, evaluate, INTERVENE EARLY, recognize and treat the social/emotional and mental health needs of young children – and to provide a network of support for children and their families based on evidenced-based practices. Our 3 goals/objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To host events and trainings to build workforce capacity in supporting social-emotional development;</li> <li>2. To promote evidence-based initiative-programs to increase the social-emotional skills of young children 0-5;</li> <li>3. To increase our network of parents and collaborative partners with shared goals and strategies for building the social/emotional skills of young children.</li> </ol> <p>We partnered with First Five California and Dr. Barbara Ivins, Clinical Director/Interim Program Manager Early Intervention Services at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital (Co-Director SAMHSA FUNDED Infancy and Early Childhood Mental Health Consortium through UCSF Department of Psychiatry) to identify “red flags for social-emotional development for children up to age 5” and positive childhood experiences which can build resiliency in the child and family unit through protective factors. Two proven evidenced-based practices were identified to address social-emotional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family-Guided Routines Based Intervention (FGRBI) strengthening the child-parent dyad through a “coaching model” of social communication embedded in family routines and daily in-home activities</li> <li>• Incredible Years Curriculum for children 0-5 offered in a parent support group setting including counselling in prevention interventions for high-risk, economically disadvantaged families, foster families, and families referred due to abuse and neglect -- with special attention to those families receiving diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder or are considered at-risk (e.g. early atypical spectrum disorder- ASD provisional diagnosis)</li> </ul>

		<p>Four sub-contractors were identified to support this plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easter Seals Northern California (ESNORCAL) – experienced in offering FGRBI to children 0-3 in 1:1 settings in Lake County. Designated to expand services to children 0 to day before 5<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1:1 and 1:3 settings across all 4 Counties by project’s conclusion.</li> <li>• Northcoast Nurture Center – operated by Dr. Robin Kissinger, Ph.D. to start-up and offer Incredible Years Parent Support Group services in Humboldt County and to expand to all 4 Counties by project’s conclusion</li> <li>• Autism Intervention Professional (AIP) – to begin to offer Behavioral Services through an FGRBI perspective to a small group of clients in both Northern and Southern Counties and provide behavioral consultation</li> <li>• RL Therapies Group – a state-wide teletherapy agency offering Speech-Language, Occupational, and Physical Therapy utilizing a routines-based coaching model. RL Therapies was sub-contracted through the Grant to provide appropriate Assessments and Training for Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices (AAC) and Assistance Devices (AT) as well to assist in purchase of technology and wi-fi for clients for whom lack of technology was a barrier for service.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 4</b></p>	<p><b>Pilot the Plan</b></p>	<p>Plan objectives were written Pre-Covid, but the Grant was awarded as the Pandemic was beginning. To “keep to our vision and goals”, rapid changes had to be made. All trainings and services “went virtual” on a Zoom platform with RL Therapies “stepping up” to assist in acquisition of laptops so any parent interested in trainings or on-going early intervention services could receive them. RL Therapies existing expertise in this field was vital. ESNORCAL developed a plan to offer their FGRBI Early Intervention Services virtually within two weeks while meeting their Year One Goal to develop services for children 0-5 and completing their revised vendorization for 1:1 and 1:3 services. The Northcoast Nurture Center acquired the IY Curriculum and began offering Groups virtually in Humboldt County with high participant satisfaction. AIP developed a “Remote Caregiver Plan” with Dr. Richard Blumberg, an international expert in the field of Autism, and began to pilot this innovative behavioral service via blue-tooth technology. High quality Provider Academies were started and then offered quarterly to build-up workforce capacity. By Grant’s end, ten Provider Academies will be offered from such leading experts as Dr. Barbara Ivins, Clinical Director/Interim Program Manager Early Intervention Services, UCSF Benioff; Dr. Lucille Esralew, Senior Supervising Psychologist, Department of Developmental Services, Clinical Branch; and Dr. Richard Blumberg, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Former Executive Director Redwood Coast Regional Center, and winner 2022 Frank Menoloscino Award for Excellence from National Association of Dually Diagnosed. Both Dr. Esralew (February 2023) and Dr. Blumberg (April 2023) will be returning to offer our Grant’s final two Provider Academies. Community Participation already has exceeded Grant’s goal.</p>

		<p>We also supported and promoted quality trainings from our collaborative partners; such as, First Five Lake County’s event series in conjunction with Child Welfare Services and Chabot Las Positas Community College including “Moving from ACES to HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) by Dr. Jeff Linkenbach, Director and Chief Research Scientist of the Montana Institute; and First Five Humboldt County in conjunction with Two Feathers Native American Family Services including “The Ripple Effect: Enhancing Trauma Informed Practices Across Systems” with Dr. Chandra Ghosh Ippen. We offered Parent Academies monthly in both English and Spanish to support parents and provide practical skill-building; including: “What Now? My Child Has Received a Diagnosis... Answering Questions and Addressing Concerns” by Dr. Barbara Sprout, Director of CBEM (Creating Behavioral and Educational Momentum); “Tools for Building Coping Skills – Practical Tips for Getting Through Challenging Times”; by Denise Keller, MA, BCBA, Behavioral Consultant and Parent of Child with Special Needs; “Partnering in Play – Bring Out Your Child’s Best in Independent, Cooperative, and Imaginary Play” by Amy Hanson, Mendocino County SELPA Program Specialist/former Special Education Preschool Teacher; “What You See is What You Get: Using Visuals to Support Your Child’s Communication, Understanding, and Independence” by Michaela Figini-Myers, MA, CAPTAIN Team Member (California Autism and Professional Training Network).</p>
<p><b>Step 5</b></p>	<p><b>Promote the Plan</b></p>	<p>Positive communication was key -- we held weekly meetings with our Core MHSA Staff; bi-weekly or monthly meetings with our Sub-Contractors; Monthly Meetings with Community Partners; participated in Unit/Departmental Meetings when needed/requested; and Quarterly Meetings with our MHSA Advisory Council. We prepared “Save-the-Date” Quarterly Flyers and Monthly Reminder Flyers in English and Spanish which were distributed to Regional Center Staff and Community Partners by e-mail with requests to share with their Teams, Parents, and Contacts as appropriate. We printed and snail-mailed flyers to parents of children 0-5 to ensure no one was “left out” of the communication loop. We worked on building a stronger Social Media presence as we discovered that is one of the primary communication tools for our parent population. We invited our best Spanish language contacts in the community to directly contact those within their sphere of influence and personally invite their participation. Additionally, both ESNORCAL and RCRC’s Diversity Outreach Team shared flyers with the public at Community Outreach Events</p>
<p><b>Step 6</b></p>	<p><b>Evaluate Progress and Make Continual Refinements</b></p>	<p>Social-emotional progress was measured by the Developmental Assessment for Young Children (DAYC-2) and all Assessors were offered training to ensure tool was administered uniformly and according to best practice. Functional Behavioral Assessments were administered to clients with identified behavioral concerns as well as Parental Stress Inventories. Every training (Parent and Provider) included participation surveys to ensure information was easy to understand; helpful for their family or in their professional position; and if the participant would recommend the training event to others. Those surveys shaped scheduling of the next sets of trainings. More direct contact resulted in greater participation.</p>

		<p>Over the long course of the pandemic, it was noted by parents and providers alike that “Zoom fatigue” was setting in – with fewer consistent intervention sessions with resultant impact on client progress. Long-term effects of the pandemic on childhood development have been noted in research nationwide and within our own 4 Counties. One SELPA contact noted: “So many children; so far behind.” Concerted efforts to “get back to” more “in-person” services to better serve clients and families were made once health and safety recommendations permitted. Full staffing has been an on-going challenge – as individuals who “worked long and hard” during the pandemic began to take much needed leaves. RCRC has sought creative solutions such as seeking (and receiving) additional Grants to focus on identified needs (e.g. funding to train “RBTs” within underserved populations and pay for required exams; Language Access funding to translate more resources and documents into language of origin). One of the businesses designated as a sub-contractor did not survive the Pandemic and was purchased by an out-of-area Provider who elected to no longer serve our rural Catchment Area – with DDS approval, existing sub-contractors took on their service role for Year Three of our Grant.</p>
<p><b>Step 7</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure Sustainability</b></p>	<p>A central focus of the F.A.S.T. Grant was to expand Infant Development Services up to the 5<sup>th</sup> birthday for all appropriate clients with an IFSP or IPP and RCRC obtained in writing from DDS that those services could continue to be funded by POS beyond Grant’s conclusion per Title 17 Regulations through the 805 Code. Provisional Eligibility for client’s up to the 5<sup>th</sup> birthday also became law in June 2021.</p> <p>From day-one of the Grant, we informed all sub-contractors that Grant funding would end and that all services provided would need to be funded by POS by end of Grant. Each sub-contractor began working with our Community Resource Department to write appropriate Service Designs and complete their own vendorization process. As the Pandemic proceeded and changes to needs and services occurred, vendors continued to work with Community Resources to update service designs. ESNORCAL, Northcoast Nurture Center, and RL Therapies are now fully vendored to provide services beyond the conclusion of the Grant. Remaining Grant funding is being utilized to expand Sub-contractor’s existing services into new areas and to build workforce capacity through new hires, training and staff development.</p> <p>In addition to support from our own RCRC professional staff and from the Clinical Branch of DDS, we have built strong collaboration with community partners and providers and anticipate that quality trainings to build workforce capacity will continue beyond Grant’s end – for example, RL Therapies is now providing monthly trainings in Speech, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy (English and Spanish) which are available free to Regional Center families.</p>

<b>Step 8</b>	<b>Share Forward Resources and Tools Developed</b>	<p>A full on-line library (Padlet) including Parent and Provider Academy presentations, videos, flyers, as well as additional practical tools and resources is available in English and Spanish at our Redwood Coast Regional Center website:  RCRC website: <a href="https://redwoodcoastrc.org">https://redwoodcoastrc.org</a>  MHSa page: <a href="https://redwoodcoastrc.org/about-us/grants/mhsa-grant/">https://redwoodcoastrc.org/about-us/grants/mhsa-grant/</a>  Resource page: <a href="https://redwoodcoastrc.org/resources/">https://redwoodcoastrc.org/resources/</a>  PARENTS: To access the Parent Padlet from the Resource Page, click “For Parents of Children with Special Needs”; for SPANISH click on the first box under “Recursos in Espanol”  PROVIDERS: To access the Provider Padlet from the Resource Page, click “For Service Providers”</p>
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Expect the unexpected and be prepared to make continual adjustments while persevering in your Vision to support families – ***“It is not until we find ourselves in the position of caregiver, that we understand the demands upon our skills, personalities, stamina, and ultimately our hearts.”***  
Dr. Richard Blumberg, Ph.D., with Ella Hurley, B.A., (2007) [Enhancing Early Intervention for Parents of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Information, Strategies, and Resources](#), New Brunswick, NJ: The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities