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FSA to request \$90K for two initial programs

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Orange County Health Department staff presented Monday preliminary survey data and the needs that two communities had decided were their highest priorities.

After two and a half months of collecting data through surveys, the staff found that kindergarten readiness, childcare and support for families were needs in both pilot communities, Zones 4 and 6. Each community also had its individual challenges, such as transportation in Zone 4 and lack of affordable housing in Zone 6.

The staff presented those findings to the advisory council for the Family Success Alliance Health and recommended that the advisory council approve a request for the remaining \$90,000 from Orange County's social justice fund.



The money would go toward two initial programs for Zones 4 and 6, said Meredith Stewart, program manager for the Family Success Alliance.

The first program would focus on meeting a need that was a priority in both communities – kindergarten readiness. Stewart said the program, to start over the summer, would expand

support for incoming kindergartners. The program would also include a short-term kindergarten prep program for those students who had never attended preschool. They would be introduced to the structure of a school day as well as to their teachers.

Stewart said this program would initially roll out in one elementary school in Hillsborough east of I-40 (Zone 4) and one elementary school in Chapel Hill and Carrboro (Zone 6).

The program would help to establish a cohort of families that the Family Success Alliance could work with until their students were ready for a college or career.

The kindergarten readiness program would cost \$40,000 for each zone and would serve 80 to 100 students in each zone, she said.

If this kindergarten readiness plan weren't feasible, Stewart said that health department staff had suggested a second option.

The Family Success Alliance would work to build a similar cohort of families, but instead of the kindergarten readiness program, families would participate in a literacy program. Staff would work with both parents and students to teach them how to read and work at home together.

This approach would cost about \$50,000 to implement in both zones, Stewart said.

The second program would provide "navigators" who live and work in each community. The navigators' job would be to connect families to different services that are available and to provide "a unified point of contact and support for zone families," Stewart said.



The navigators would have a physical location in one of the zone partners' buildings – for example, a school or a service provider.

The navigator program's estimated budget is \$10,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year and an additional \$150,000 for fiscal year 2015-16.

Some members of the advisory council seemed hesitant to agree to the recommended kindergarten readiness program, pointing out that the second literacy training option would leave more funds available for wraparound support services.

After much debate, the council approved the request for \$90,000 from the social justice fund. However, the council asked staff to find a program that would implement both kindergarten readiness and literacy training.

The community navigator program will also proceed as suggested.

Work on the programs will begin as early as this summer, and the data collected from the surveys will be compiled into a comprehensive baseline report that will be made publicly available.

The advisory council's next meeting is scheduled for June 22.

