

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: Lutheran Services in Iowa

LIAISON: Quinn Wood

Crisis Child Care

1. Need for Program

This program targets parents of children between ages 0-12. LSI partners with registered in-home childcare providers to provide up to 72 hours of childcare to parents in a crisis or emergency. This program is not intended to replace childcare providers who have, for example, simply called in sick. LSI is one of very few providers in Iowa to offer this type of program (one is in Marshalltown and another is in north Iowa.)

This program fulfills United Way of Story County's Health, Result 2, Strategy 2.2 priority by allowing parents to seek mental health care in times of crisis rather than staying home with children who need supervision. This program also addresses United Way of Story County's Financial Stability, Result 2, Strategy 2.2 priority by providing emergency, free childcare to parents who have unexpected interviews they cannot bring children to (an example provided during the agency visit.) This program fulfills one of the City of Ames' highest priorities of affordable in-home childcare. This program fulfills one of the City of Ames' #2 priorities of providing crisis intervention services. This program fulfills the ISU Student Government's highest priority of childcare services but does not particularly emphasize infant and toddler care. This program fulfills Story County's highest priority of affordable, quality childcare.

2. Program Strengths

This program allows parents in the community to have access to free, safe childcare in times of great need rather than relying on someone they don't know well like a neighbor or someone off Craigslist (both examples provided during the agency visit).

3. Program Weaknesses

Due in part to the pandemic, LSI does not have the childcare provider resources it needs to serve every referral or consumer who requests services.

Parents as Teachers

1. Need for Program

This program targets parents of children ages 0-5 who meet one of the following criteria: the family is below 200% poverty level, the parents have a high school education or below, or a child in the family has a special need. This program focuses on the financially needed; only 25% of served families can exceed the income limit. LSI brings in parent educators for a 45-minute session once per week (currently virtually) to discuss topics such as parent interaction, appropriate parenting styles, developmental milestones, and Kindergarten-ready skills. Without this program, served children will be less likely to achieve Kindergarten readiness and literacy.

This program fulfills United Way of Story County's Education, Result 1, Strategy 1.2 priority by increasing the likelihood that children will enter school with the skills needed to succeed in Kindergarten. This program addresses one of the City of Ames' #3 priorities of youth skill development and enrichment by preparing children for school.

2. Program Strengths

The service also acts as a type of referral service to other programs in the community that may benefit participant families, especially when there is a language barrier to finding or participating in these other programs.

3. Program Weaknesses

Due to the pandemic, engaging children (virtually) has been a challenge.

Family Development/Education

1. Need for Program

This program targets parents who are isolated. Before the pandemic, parents met twice a week, often with a speaker such as one through the ISU Extension Office (STEM, nutrition, etc.) During the pandemic, parents have met once a week virtually. This program also provides parenting classes that are acceptable to DHS. This is one of the only programs parents and children can both attend during daytime hours.

This program does provide childcare during the talks as an incidental service, but unlike with Parents as Teachers, I am unable to identify current funder priorities being fulfilled by the adult educational programming itself.

2. Program Strengths

Iowa State maintains a partnership with LSI to provide some of the educational programming used in this service.

3. Program Weaknesses

Due to the pandemic, parenting classes are not available at this time (they must be completed in person.)

Financial Outlook

LSI does not expect major financial changes this upcoming year except placements in Crisis Childcare will likely resume after the pandemic.

Internal Management Practices

The local board which covers the area including Story County includes multiple service coordinators and the facilities manager. The regular board covers the entire state.

Agency Suggestions/Comments

The Parent Café events scheduled for the Spring and Fall did not take place. LSI is hoping to hold an event in the Spring of 2021.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

LSI has two programs that strongly fit into priorities the ASSET funders have identified and one that may not. As a statewide organization, it appears to be effectively leveraging its resources to build programs that benefit both adults and children. Service coordinators are directly involved in corporate governance.