



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

LFIR # 1498

1. **Project Title**

2. **Senate Sponsor**

3. **Date of Request**

4. **Project/Program Description**

Simply put, too many children with autism are waiting for services. Easterseals Autism Center of Excellence requests a specific appropriation of \$175,000 in the 2020-2021 budget to directly serve at least 135 children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who are underfunded or underinsured in the Northeast region of Florida. There is a significant statewide shortage (12-18 month waiting list) of clinicians providing a Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) which is required to access and maintain state-funded autism services such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Med Waiver qualification. Easterseals physician referrals for CDE services increased 22% in the last year. Our goal remains to lower the age of autism diagnosis for children in our region, particularly in minority groups, so that proven, evidence based, individualized treatment plans can reach financially vulnerable children as early as possible. Early intervention is key and reduces lifetime costs of autism services.

5. **State Agency to receive requested funds**

State Agency contacted? ☒ Yes ☐ No

6. **Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2020-2021**

Type of Funding	Amount
Operations	<input type="text" value="175,000"/>
Fixed Capital Outlay	<input type="text" value="000"/>
Total State Funds Requested	<input type="text" value="175,000"/>

7. **Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (including matching funds available for this project)**

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	<input type="text" value="175000"/>	<input type="text" value="100.0"/> %
Matching Funds		
Federal	<input type="text" value="00"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
State (excluding the amount of this request)	<input type="text" value="00"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
Local	<input type="text" value="00"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
Other	<input type="text" value="00"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2020-2021	<input type="text" value="175,000"/>	<input type="text" value="100"/> %

8. **Has this project previously received state funding?** ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, provide the most recent instance:

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		
<input type="text" value="2019-20"/>	<input type="text" value="00"/>	<input type="text" value="100,000"/>	<input type="text" value="1686"/>	<input type="text" value="No"/>

9. **Is future-year funding likely to be requested?** ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.



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10. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits		
Other Salary and Benefits		
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Administrative Cost Allocation	7,541
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		
Operational Costs: Other		
Salary and Benefits	Salaries/ Wages; Benefits for Autism Center clinical staff, ADOS coordinator, case managers, and PLAY Project home consultants	118,791
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Program supplies; Office supplies; Cont. Ed; IT; Telephone/Utilities; Equipment lease/purchase;+ Insurance/ Maintenance/Repair; Postage; Bank Fees; Payroll service fees; PLAY Project License; Staff travel; Maintenance; Misc.	19,668
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Professional Fees for Direct Clinical Services (Clinical Psychiatrist/ Psychologist; BCBA or BCABA consultant; independent contract occupational, physical and speech/language therapists.	29,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/ Land/Planning Engineering		
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		175,000



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11. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

Gratefully, Easterseals received \$100,000 in the 2019-2020 state budget to assist clients referred by their physician to Easterseals' Autism Center of Excellence for early diagnosis and functional assessment and treatment services but who remained on a waiting list for lack of funding. Still, many families struggle to gain access to early diagnosis and evidence-based treatments. Easterseals goal is to lower the overall age of diagnosis for school-age children in the region while providing early diagnostics and individualized therapeutic interventions to an additional 135 children. Further, we plan to significantly increase access and participation of The PLAY Project™, a parent implemented, intensive early intervention program for young children with autism that is evidence-based.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

Easterseals' Autism Center of Excellence's philosophy focuses on parents understanding the importance of their participation in the child's therapy and how they can maximize the impact of early intervention and behavioral services. Our performance data and results have helped us to understand the BARRIERS that parents face in achieving an early diagnosis and prevent them from successfully navigating the complex health, educational and funding systems associated with an ASD diagnosis. Easterseals has made significant efforts to address these barriers, including physician education and outreach, parent education and marketing and working with community partners to purposefully target at-risk children to ensure diagnostic, functional assessment, treatment, and family support services as early as possible. Further, free autism screening events are held weekly and made available through community partners and related health facilities and clinics.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

Easterseals receives physician referrals for Autism Diagnosis and Functional Assessment on a regular basis and potential clients for diagnostic services are channeled through a bi-weekly clinic to receive therapy (occupational, physical and speech/language) and audiology evaluations, parent interviews, case management and administration of the Autism Diagnostic and Observation Schedule (ADOS) 2, with a follow-up differential diagnosis and treatment plan with a psychiatrist or a clinical psychologist. Treatment includes an evaluation as indicated, and an approved plan of care guides the treatment and progress within each therapy discipline. Direct, evidence-based therapy interventions, including the PLAY Project (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and social skills training are offered, as well as case management and financial assistance to clients who are underinsured and who request funding.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

Easterseals' Autism Center of Excellence targets children ages 12 months to 18 years who are referred by their pediatrician or physician because they exhibit signs and symptoms of autism spectrum disorder. Up to 135 children will receive direct services. According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the United States, affecting boys four times more often than girls. Minority groups tend to be diagnosed later and less often. Our outreach efforts are focused on free screenings and early identification addressing all age, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. As many as 90% of our incoming referred clients are at or below the poverty level, which greatly limits their options in pursuing diagnosis and early, individualized treatment. Many evidence-based assessments, interventions and treatments for children with ASD are not covered by insurance.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

The following are short-term outcomes, readily measured within the funding year: Increase in family/community caregiver awareness of ASD symptomology; Increase in children accessing a definitive diagnosis earlier; Access to early intervention sooner – # of children accessing treatment plans and engaged in therapy interventions; Functional gains of each child (therapy and interventions evaluations and goal achievement); Reduction in parental stress as measured by Parenting Stress Index (PSI-4) to be used by all families (case management facilitates upon referral); Increased understanding of the health system/resource access within our community (family information folder); Family goal achievement per case management (measured at 30 days and 120 days post diagnosis), and # of direct therapy interventions provided, including Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters (PLAY), and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), reported monthly.

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for in the contract?

Withholding of funding until deliverables are substantiated.



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12. **The owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.**

No fixed capital outlay.

13. **Requestor Contact Information**

- a. First Name Last Name
- b. Organization
- c. E-mail Address
- d. Phone Number Ext.

14. **Recipient Contact Information**

- a. Organization
- b. Municipality and County
- c. Organization Type
- ☐ For-profit Entity
 - ☒ Non-Profit 501(c) (3)
 - ☐ Non-Profit 501(c) (4)
 - ☐ Local Entity
 - ☐ University or College
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
- d. First Name Last Name
- e. E-mail Address
- f. Phone Number

15. **Lobbyist Contact Information**

- a. Name
- b. Firm Name
- c. E-mail Address
- d. Phone Number Ext.