

Chris Wooten
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Committees:

Judiciary
Legislative Oversight, 1st V.C.

House of Representatives

State of South Carolina

January 29, 2023

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center will launch a school and community support program to increase the capacity of schools and community supporting partners to mitigate barriers to social-emotional learning and decrease mental health crises in the school districts of the 11th Judicial Circuit (Lexington, Edgefield, McCormick and Saluda). The program will launch a mental health multidisciplinary response to rapidly identify trauma-based crises in students, develop courses of action for care and treatment, as well as provide training, instruction and prevention activities to school mental wellness teams, resource officers, nurses and students in and out-of-school time.

The disruption, stress and isolation of the pandemic resulted in a spike in behavioral and mental health issues among our youth. Now that students are back in school, educators report seeing a variety of problems, from depression and anxiety to fighting and violent behavior. Students are dealing with losing family members or parental job loss. Teachers are experiencing similar issues, often lacking the time to manage distressed parents and students, many of whom are catching up after a year of learning loss.

Let's look carefully at the mental health crisis facing South Carolina's children as reported in the [2022 Kids Count Data](#) that proved anxiety and depression increased by an unfathomable 55.4% in children ages 3 to 17 from 2016-2020 – it more than doubled BEFORE the pandemic erupted into a mental health tsunami against our school-aged youth.

Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center is poised to bridge the gap to this rising mental health crisis in our youth by providing transformative training, instruction, prevention and expertise to teachers, counselors, mental health teams, resource officers, nurses, and students. With an established memorandum of agreement with Lexington School District One and permission from other schools to provide these critical interventions and resources, there is no other nonprofit agency in Lexington County better poised to launch this effort than Dickerson CAC.

The Project budget for Supporting Our Community and Schools (SOCS) is \$300,000 over a three year period.

230,000	– Salary and Contract Fees
20,000	– Equipment and Supplies
5,000	– Printing and Brochures
10,000	– Training and Community Meetings
<u>30,000</u>	– Administrative (10%)
\$300,000	

With decades of experience as one of the leading experts in identifying and treating child trauma, Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center is well-positioned to partner with schools to address this gap in identifying and treating trauma-related mental health challenges for school-age children to mitigate mental health barriers to learning and improve academic achievement. We have fully executed a memorandum of agreements already established with Lexington School District One and other schools to provide these critical interventions.


The new SC Child Abuse Protocol mandates that law enforcement utilize the services of child trauma experts from advocacy centers for victims of child abuse and witnessing violence. The dire need for this level of service delivery is glaringly evident in the nearly 16,000 children in founded investigations of child abuse (according to the recent data from Children's Trust of SC).

Lexington Medical Center's Community Health Needs Assessment identified mental health care as one of the top three most prevalent health needs of our community. Sadly, current research shows a serious gap in meeting this critical need for our youth. The Mental Health America 2020 report ¹ **rank**s SC **50th** for the care of youth with mental health needs and access to care; and ranked **48th** when it came to caring for the mental health of youth overall.

Dickerson CAC is a leading expert in the field and chair of the first Regional Human Trafficking Taskforce (appointed by Attorney General Alan Wilson) with a proven track record of more than 26 years coordinating a multi-sector approach to prioritizing the safety and well-being of children and families in crisis and promoting mental health recovery.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and, as always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or I may help in any way.

Sincerely,



Christopher Wooten

January 29, 2023

Earmark Sponsor: Representative Chris Wooten

Project/Event Name: Supporting our Community and Schools (SOCS)

Amount: \$300,000

Recipient: Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center

Recipient Type (Local Government, Non-Profit, Private Organization, etc.): Non-profit

W-9 Form (attached) and Federal Tax ID Number: 57-1011251

Point of Contact and Title: Carol Yarborough, Executive Director

Address, City and State, Phone Number, Email Address, Website: 140 Gibson Rd., Lexington, SC 29072

cyarborough@dickersoncac.org, www.dickersoncac.org

Please provide a written summary and description for:

1. The activity, function or project for which earmark is intended

Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center will launch a school and community support program to increase the capacity of schools and community supporting partners to mitigate barriers to social-emotional learning and decrease mental health crises in the school districts of the 11th Judicial Circuit (Lexington, Edgefield, McCormick and Saluda). The program will launch a mental health multidisciplinary response to rapidly identify trauma-based crises in students, develop courses of action for care and treatment, as well as provide training, instruction and prevention activities to school mental wellness teams, resource officers, nurses and students in and out-of-school time.

2. Public purpose served by the project:

The disruption, stress and isolation of the pandemic resulted in a spike in behavioral and mental health issues among our youth. Now that students are back in school, educators report seeing a variety of problems, from depression and anxiety to fighting and violent behavior. Students are dealing with losing family members or parental job loss. Teachers are experiencing similar issues, often lacking the time to manage distressed parents and students, many of whom are catching up after a year of learning loss.

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Thank you for creating the foundation for this indispensable work to advance student health, learning, and academic success.

3. Project budget for Supporting Our Community and Schools (SOCS)

230,000 – Salary and Contract Fees
20,000 – Equipment and Supplies
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10,000 – Training and Community Meetings
<u>30,000</u> – Administrative (10%)
\$300,000

4. Demonstrated community support and need

With decades of experience as one of the leading experts in identifying and treating child trauma, Dickerson Children’s Advocacy Center is well-positioned to partner with schools to address this gap in identifying and treating trauma-related mental health challenges for school-age children to mitigate mental health barriers to learning and improve academic achievement. We have fully executed a memorandum of agreements already established with Lexington School District One and other schools to provide these critical interventions.

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5. Details of any state funds previously appropriated to the same entity for same or similar purpose.

Last year, Dickerson CAC received a one-time, non-recurring appropriation in state general funds from the Department of Social Services for \$250,000 to provide critical resources to care for and protect child abuse victims who are more likely to be failed by the investigative, assessment, and treatment process by implementing Project C.A.R.E. (Collaborate, Access, Resources, Empower).

¹ [2020 Mental Health in America - Youth Data | Mental Health America \(mhanational.org\)](#)

The Department of Children Advocates appropriation of \$200,00 is similar in that it will benefit victims of child abuse and violence by expanding the capacity of forensic medical services to meet the increased need resulting from the unfunded mandate of the SC Child Abuse Protocol, Act #0028.

Send to:

Office of the Governor South Carolina Statehouse, 1100 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201

budget@governor.sc.gov