



# Boone County, Missouri

## Quarter-Cent Sales Tax Supports Partnerships and Services for Infants, Toddlers, and Children

### OVERVIEW

In 2012, Boone County leaders decided not to dedicate funds for additional children's services even after research indicated a need for them. In response, advocates from the community went door-to-door to gain voter support to pass the Putting Kids First ballot initiative, a quarter-cent sales tax increase to create a dedicated fund for services to support children.

The fund has increased support for families with infants and toddlers by creating a dedicated center through the county's Community Services Department, expanding home visiting services and mental health support, and leveraging partnerships with higher education institutions to build the capacity of early care and education providers. Since its establishment, the Children's Services Fund has supported services for 4,845 infants and toddlers under the age of three.

### THE PURPOSE

Missouri law allows county tax dollars to be used on services that benefit children ages 0-19, including "prevention services." This provision also allows the funds to flow towards children's families.

When Boone County service providers came together in 2012 to request a county sales tax to support services for children, there was limited funding for mental health and other supportive services to improve the social-emotional well-being of children. Boone County leaders recognized a profound need and opportunity to create a dedicated children's fund knowing that investing in infants and toddlers can

prevent negative outcomes and achievement gaps later in life.

Today, 35 programs in the county are supported by the Children's Services Fund (CSF), including infant and toddler early care and education, home visits for expectant parents and families with new babies, parenting classes, emergency shelters, healthcare and mental health services, housing assistance, and foster family support systems.

One of the first projects to develop infrastructure to support social-emotional well-being for families with infants and toddlers was the Family Access Center of Excellence (FACE), a one-stop shop where families can connect with existing social services. Families in the county can use FACE to learn about and sign-up for services in person or through an online signup process.

According to Steve Hollis from the Columbia and Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services, CSF has helped build early life support systems. "We can do more home visits now and provide services we could not before, like mental health and maternal depression. Not only did CSF expand home visiting services, but it also expanded all our early life interventions, whether it's WIC or pregnancy support."

Another critical issue in the county was the number of unregulated and unlicensed child care providers for infants and toddlers. To raise the overall quality of early care and education, CSF helps educators receive certification and training in child development through a contract with Moberly Area Community College (MACC).



Tracy Huang, coordinator for MACC's early childhood degree program, says the hope is to ensure that families can access high-quality infant and toddler child care even if they are not eligible for subsidized programs like Early Head Start. With their grant from CSF, MACC will help 180 existing and future teachers earn the Child Development Associate Credential, a nationally recognized certification that puts teachers on track for an associate degree in early childhood education.

## THE FUNDING MODEL

After the county sales tax passed in November 2012, the Children's Services Fund (CSF) was created with a nine-member Boone County Children's Services Board to approve all funding proposals. The Board consists of community members with expertise in the following areas: mental health (including advocates and providers), healthcare administration, government or social services administration, a recipient of social services or the guardian of a recipient, someone with legal training, and an accountant or other financial expert.

The revenue collected from the tax varies from year to year, with a low of \$4 million received during the Fund's first operating year, 2014-2015, and a high of almost \$10 million in 2016. In 2018, the tax generated \$6 million in revenue.

Community services, providers, and nonprofits apply yearly for funding, and applicants must submit a data-gathering model with their proposal. The Boone Impact Group (BIG), comprised of Boone County's main local funders, collects data from fund recipients on a regular basis through a central partnership. The BIG created a central taxonomy of services and a Boone Indicators Dashboard, which community organizations use to access recent county-level data. The county has also contracted with the University of Missouri's Institute of Public Policy to provide various needs assessments and follow-up across agencies regarding the status of work in the community.

Boone County Community Services Director Kelly Wallis noted that the Board focuses every other year

on a special issue, such as youth homelessness or early childhood crisis intervention, and directs funding to those issues during the proposal process. The first special issue was "access to services," which led to the creation of FACE. The program now has a clinical staff of seven who connect families to services and monitors progress through visits. FACE also helps collect data from providers and report outcomes back to the county.

## WHY IT WORKS

The county and community organizations that participate in the Children's Services Fund (CSF) believe the system works because it provides intervention in the earliest stages of life and focuses on parental well-being and provider training, which are all critical elements for supporting healthy families in Boone County. Data compiled by University of Missouri's Institute of Public Policy show that CSF-funded programs have been particularly successful among at-risk families. Between 2015 and 2018, more than 151,000 individuals received services funded by the sales tax dollars. Across all programs, parents report a 79 percent satisfaction rate.

Steve Hollis from the Health and Human Services Department explained that at the county level, case managers are now able to refer individuals to the services funded by CSF, including about 75 percent of Boone County's low-income pregnant women in the last year. CSF has also put significant investment into ASQ child development screenings for infants and toddlers, so providers are now completing social-emotional evaluations with the families they serve. Pediatric medical providers in Boone County are also using the screening tool, which has built a more comprehensive connection and referral network.

Hollis believes one benefit of the CSF is that it facilitates partnerships with other government entities and institutions, such as the local university, Head Start programs, and public schools. For example, several programs have been funded through the Department of Psychiatry at the University of



Missouri, and two programs in particular were designed to support children ages 0-5 and their families:

- The Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (EC-PBS) program trains early childhood providers on social-emotional development and provides weekly on-site coaching sessions to promote school readiness, social-emotional development, and reduce problem behaviors
- The Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) program provides services for children ages 0-5 and their parents or caregivers who have experienced trauma.

According to Dr. Laine Young-Walker, Chief of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University's Medical School, "At first, we just needed early childhood experience for our fellows, but we didn't have much to offer them. Over time, our early child initiative became more about what we could do to help the community." The EC-PBS program has provided services to 2,294 children and 521 teachers. Recently, they added parenting intervention, using Triple P Positive Parenting. "It's a win-win for both the county and the university," Young-Walker said.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Without the state enabling legislation, Boone County would not have been able to levy the sales tax to fund the Children's Services Fund.
- To date, Boone County has spent approximately \$2.4 million directly on children ages 0-5, with additional dollars spent for services directed to parents, families, caregivers, and other important individuals in a child's life. .
- Community Services Director Kelly Wallis says that transparency is critical to the success of a community program like this. "There's always those folks who oppose taxes," she noted, "but we've focused on being as transparent as possible as far as which providers are being supported by the tax funds, where the money goes, etc. Every dollar that's spent, we let the public know."
- The Boone County program has achieved a widespread reputation; former First Lady Michelle Obama singled it out in a 2018 speech, among the nine other counties in Missouri with similar programs.



## SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

### **Boone County Community Services**

<https://www.showmeboone.com/community-services/>

### **Family Access Center of Excellence (FACE), website.**

<https://faceofboonecounty.org/>

### **"Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (EC-PBS)," SOAR for Resilience in Early Childhood.**

<http://www.helpingyoungchildrensoar.org/early-childhood-positive-behavior-support-ec-pbs/>

### **"Child-Parent Psychotherapy Program," SOAR for Resilience in Early Childhood.**

<http://www.helpingyoungchildrensoar.org/child-parent-psychotherapy/>

### **"Triple P Positive Parenting Program," Boone County Early Childhood Coalition**

<https://www.bcecc.org/triple-p>

### **"Boone County Dedicates Millions to Early Childhood Programs," Brittany Ruess, Columbia Daily Tribune, May 8, 2017.**

<https://www.columbiatribune.com/news/20170508/boone-county-dedicates-millions-to-early-childhood-programs>

### **"It's Time for Boone County to Put Children First," Columbia Daily Tribune, June 22, 2012.**

<https://www.columbiatribune.com/article/20120622/Lifestyle/306229693>

### **"Application for Appointment to Boone County Children's Services Board," Boone County Commission.**

[https://report.boonecountymo.org/mrcjava/servlet/CM01\\_MP.M00050s](https://report.boonecountymo.org/mrcjava/servlet/CM01_MP.M00050s)

### **Boone Impact Group (BIG), website.**

<http://www.booneimpact.org/>

### **"Boone Indicators Dashboard," Boone Impact Group (BIG).**

[http://www.booneimpact.org/?post\\_projects=boone-indicators-dashboard](http://www.booneimpact.org/?post_projects=boone-indicators-dashboard)

### **"Welcome to ASQ," ASQ Ages and Stages Questionnaires®.**

<https://agesandstages.com/landing-page/welcome/>

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