



in partnership with



## Peer-to-Peer Youth Mental Health High School Pilot Demonstration

### Request For Applications

Application Release Date: January 9, 2024

Application Deadline: March 22, 2024

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## Part I: Overview

### About the Grant Opportunity

The High School Peer-to-Peer Demonstration Pilot is a school-based youth-driven mental health grant opportunity. [The Children's Partnership](#) (TCP), a California advocacy organization advancing child health equity through research, policy, and community engagement, is spearheading this effort in partnership with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

As included in the California 2022-2023 State Budget, this grant will administer a historic investment in youth mental health and well-being through an \$8 million effort to support eight high schools (grades 9-12) in urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state as pilot sites in California for a student peer-to-peer program. Exceptional youth leaders, including Sriya Chilla and Nghia Do at the California Children's Trust, championed this new investment in peer support, together with Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula, Chair of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, the project is a direct recommendation from TCP's youth policy council, [The Hope, Healing and Health Collective](#) (H3C).

The Children's Partnership is committed to a collaborative partnership with the eight high school grantees, desiring to identify best practices for peer-to-peer programs that can be implemented statewide and serve as a model for national efforts. The Children's Partnership will contribute to advocacy for sustainable funding and infrastructure for youth-driven, peer-to-peer programs in California.

Increasing access to youth peer-to-peer programs will further the goals of California's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI). Authorized as part of the 2021 Budget Act, the CYBHI is a multi-year, multi-department package of investments that reimagines the systems that support behavioral health (BH) and wellness for all California's children, youth, and their families. Efforts focus on promoting social and emotional well-being, preventing BH challenges, and providing equitable, appropriate, timely, and accessible services for emerging and existing BH needs for children and youth ages 0-25. The \$4.6 billion investment in CYBHI will improve access to, and the quality of, BH services for all children and youth in California, regardless of payer.

### About The Children's Partnership

[The Children's Partnership](#) (TCP) envisions a California where all children—regardless of their race, ethnicity, or place of birth—have the resources and opportunities they need to grow healthy

and thrive. Our mission is to advance this vision of child health equity through research, policy, and community engagement.

The Children's Partnership is the state's leading voice for children's health equity. We build power with those most affected by policy decisions to advance a collective agenda. We are a dynamic, robust, statewide advocacy organization that brings the voices of lived experience to the important tables where policy decisions impacting children are being made.

Together with community partners, educators, direct service organizations, health care professionals, youth leaders and faith groups across the state, The Children's Partnership advances a unified agenda for California's children. It is considered a trusted convener, collaborative ally, and expert partner.

Learn more about The Children's Partnership's core beliefs and priorities in our [strategic plan](#).

### **Peer-to-Peer Pilot Demonstration Purpose**

Peer support is an essential [evidence-based strategy](#) for supporting mental health with more than 80 years of proven results. Peer-to-Peer programs in schools are a multi-benefit solution to the youth mental health crisis that addresses the broken medical model, focuses on prevention, enables culturally responsive support, mitigates the provider shortage, and, in some models, can offer a workforce development pipeline for youth.

The current emotional and mental health crisis for youth is an escalation of unaddressed socioemotional, identity development, and health care needs, exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, research shows that Black and Latinx girls, Indigenous, and LGBTQ youth represent a distinct group of young people who are disproportionately impacted by mental health crises. These alarming trends in children's mental health are compounded for youth with several marginalized identities, including their gender identity, sexual orientation, and race or ethnicity.

In response, young people across California have advocated for culturally responsive, gender-affirming mental health support. They have put forward policy recommendations to build the capacity of youth peer leaders within their school communities, building on strategies laid out in the TCP [Advancing School-Based Mental Health](#), California Children's Trust [Youth Supporting Youth](#), and Mental Health America's [Expanding Community-Driven Mental Health Resources](#) policy briefs, and in alignment with the integrated ecosystem envisioned by the CYBHI and included in the [Working Paper: California's Children & Youth Behavioral Health Ecosystem](#).

Partnering with schools is essential to expanding access to critical services and supports for young people. Focusing on schools as a key to scaling peer-to-peer programs acknowledges the importance of social influence and peer attachments in the adolescent years. Although peer support workers do not duplicate or replace the roles of therapists, case managers, or other care team members, by sharing their lived experiences and practical guidance, peer supporters offer acceptance, understanding, and validation not found in many other professional relationships. This mutuality between a peer supporter and another young person seeking support promotes connection, inspires hope, and supports decreasing mental health stigma amongst youth.

By partnering with the **eight high school grantees**, The Children’s Partnership will provide selected school communities a direct opportunity to contribute to the development of a set of standards to support the expansion or implementation of unique, community-specific, and culturally responsive peer support programs. Through providing grant funding, technical assistance, participation in a statewide learning community, and evaluation, The Children’s Partnership’s goal is to contribute to advocacy for sustainable funding and infrastructure for youth-driven peer-to-peer programs in California by demonstrating positive outcomes from the eight pilot demonstrations.

### **Timeline and Grant Application Platform**

Below is the tentative timeline for this RFA. **The RFA will be released on Wednesday, December 13, 2023**, and applications will be accepted electronically starting on that date via the online platform Submittable.

Your grant application will be managed and submitted through the platform Submittable. Submittable is a website that collects and reviews applications and communicates with applicants. To submit your application, you must create an account on submittable. You will be prompted to do so when you first visit the grant application link [here](#).

Your Submittable account will allow you to start, save, and complete your grant application, and track your application status throughout the grant process.

If the Applicant cannot submit the application through the Submittable platform, please contact [peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org](mailto:peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org) with the preferred delivery method. TCP will not consider late application packages. The application deadline is **Friday, March 22, 2024**, at 11:59 pm (PST). Applicants will be notified via email and through the **Submittable platform** if changes need to be made to the timeline.

<b>Application Milestones</b>	<b>Dates</b>
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RFA Release and Application Open	Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Applicant Q&A Webinar I	Thursday, January 18, 2024
Applicant Q&A Webinar II	Thursday, February 22, 2024
RFA Closed and Application Due	Friday, March 22, 2024

**Grant Award Amounts**

The maximum award amount will vary based on the program model, proposed budget, and school population size. The total minimum award amount over three years is expected to be at least \$450,000 and not expected to exceed \$1,500,000. It is important to note that actual grant awards will vary and not all applicants will receive the maximum grant amount.

Estimated Minimum Award Amount	Estimated Maximum Award Amount
\$450,000	\$1,500,000

Based on outlined deliverables in the MOU, the Children’s Partnership will distribute funds to grantees on a scheduled basis. TCP anticipates the grant duration period will be up to three years. Applicants must justify requested amounts as part of the application process. Supplemental documentation may be required to support the request (i.e., receipts, proof of salary, etc.).

**Technical Assistance**

A combination of program types and innovative model approaches outlined by applicants in the program model narrative of the application are deeply encouraged. If you are currently working with a community-based organization or provider or have an organization or provider you would like to work with, detail that explicitly within the program narrative portion of the application.

As part of the grant process, selected grantee recipients will receive technical assistance and support **allocated as part of their award**. Technical assistance providers will partner with grantees to implement their proposed program model. Technical assistance providers will be contracted, managed, and **paid directly by The Children’s Partnership**.

**Learning Community**

As part of the grant process, grantees will participate in a learning community that will bring together all grantees participating in the pilot demonstration, technical assistance providers,

national peer-to-peer experts, advocates and mental health policy professionals committed to advancing progress in peer support.

## **Part II: Grant Requirements**

### **Eligibility**

**Entities eligible to receive grants as part of this RFA must meet the following criteria:**

- Individual Public High Schools serving or eventually serving grades 9-12
- Located in California

The Children's Partnership is committed to advancing equitable outcomes for California's children. Schools that hold student populations with elevated risk for mental health challenges, that serve communities of color, low-income communities, communities that have historically had difficulty receiving access to services, and whose youth have shown marked disparities in unmet mental health needs, are strongly encouraged to apply. Additionally, we hope this pilot demonstration will represent the geographic diversity of our state, and encourage schools located in small rural, suburban and large urban areas throughout California to apply.

### **Grant Partnership and Grantee Participation Requirements**

Selected Grantees will enter a multi-year partnership with The Children's Partnership and must participate in mandatory program activities as part of the grant process. The Children's Partnership expects grantees to adhere to or participate in the following minimum activities:

- Build and/or improve upon and implement a peer-to-peer youth mental health program with fidelity.
- Identify and work with a technical assistance provider as identified or approved by and in partnership with The Children's Partnership.
- Participate in quarterly learning community meetings established and facilitated by The Children's Partnership – a peer learning network for collaboration, to share ideas, resources, and approaches around program implementation, policy and systems change, community engagement, and coalition building and develop plans for action to ensure meaningful youth engagement.
- Collect data and report via an agreed-upon progress report schedule, using quantitative and qualitative demographic and outcome data related to the peer-to-peer youth mental health program.
- Adhere to reporting and evaluation requirements as defined by The Children's Partnership in collaboration with the California Department of Health Care Services.
- Attend regular check-in meetings, on-site visits, and calls with The Children's Partnership.

## Grantee Requirements on Student Involvement and Input

The Children’s Partnership believes in the power of youth to contribute meaningfully in identifying the best solutions to the challenges and barriers they face. This grant application requires that the grant applicant invites, engages, and incorporates meaningful student involvement into the production of the programmatic narrative sections of this application and, if selected, into the development and implementation of the program itself.

Recommended Actions for Student Involvement and Input:

- Surveying students on what types of programs they would like to see.
- Surveying students to understand what challenges they want to address.
- Convening a smaller group of students to take a leadership role in collaborating on completing the application and liaising with other students to understand what programs they would like to see and what challenges they want to address.

We recommend using the [Ladder of Youth Participation](#) to evaluate your approach to including youth in the application and program design process.

## Part III: Application Process

All grant applicants are required to complete their grant application via [www.submittable.com](http://www.submittable.com)

To request additional support with completing any of the components of your application, please reach out to The Children’s Partnership at [peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org](mailto:peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org).

## Grantee Application Details

The Children’s Partnership is a policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing transformational change within historically marginalized communities of color across California by supporting systemic change impacting children at the policy level. With that said, The Children’s Partnership is committed through this grant process to supporting youth-driven, peer-to-peer youth mental health programs that are responsive to the needs of each grantee’s school community. While there are existing peer support models, The Children’s Partnership is open to a diverse range of traditional and innovative peer-to-peer, programmatic models to learn best practices across models that can be codified and implemented across the state.

## Application Components

### Initial Eligibility Form Components

- School Name
- School District, if applicable
- Grades Served



- Address (Street, City, Zip Code)
- Total Number of Students
- Median Income by Zip Code (multiple zip codes acceptable)
- Acknowledgement of Minimum Eligibility Requirements
  - Please check this box acknowledging that you meet the following minimum eligibility requirements:
  - High Schools serving or eventually serving grades 9-12
  - Individual LEAs (not districts)
  - Located in California

## Main Application Form Components

### A. School Narrative

- Please provide a detailed narrative overview of your school community that addresses the following components:
  - The school's mission, vision, and focus
  - School culture successes: please include how you measure success.
  - School culture barriers: please include how you identify barriers.
  - Description of youth mental health status of school's student population
  - Description of parent/care-giver engagement
- Please describe the surrounding community and/or neighborhood, in particular local community assets and opportunities for students and families and barriers of access and opportunity for students and families.
- Please describe the school's general knowledge and experience with peer-to-peer programs.
- How do you believe peer-to-peer support programs would benefit your school community?
- Please describe the administrative engagement and buy-in as it relates to championing a youth driven peer-to-peer youth mental health program at your school site. Do you have the support of your Principal and or Executive Director? If so, what does committed support look like at your school site?

### B. Student Population Demographic Data

- Student Population Race make-up
- Student Population Gender make-up
- Staff Population Racial make-up
- Staff Population Gender make-up
- % of Student Population - English Language Learner
- % of Student Population - Classified SPED & 504
- % of Student Population - Students receiving FRL
- % of Student Population - Homeless

- % of Student Population - Justice System Involved (Inclusive of Foster Care)

### C. Student Health & Wellbeing Demographic Data

- [California Student Health Index](#)
  - (For schools with student populations > 100 - Locate your school and indicate your need level: *highest need, higher need, lower need, lowest need*)
- % Suspension Rate (*most current*)
- % Expulsion Rate (*most current*)
- % Chronic Absenteeism Rate (*most current*)
- % Psychiatric response team Calls per semester (*most current*)
- % Behavior referrals/incidents (*most current*)
- # of Mental Health Counselors on Staff or Contracted Partners
- # of Academic/College Counselors on Staff
- If question doesn't specifically apply, please provide additional details

### D. Programmatic Narrative

**Program Narrative Approach:** The Children's Partnership is a policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing transformational change within historically marginalized communities of color across California by supporting systemic change at the policy level. With that said, The Children's Partnership is committed through this grant process to supporting youth driven, peer-to-peer youth mental health programs that are responsive to the needs of each grantee's school community.

While there are existing peer support models, **The Children's Partnership is open to a diverse range of traditional and innovative peer-to-peer programmatic models to surface best practices and core features of success across models that can be codified and implemented across the state. Evaluation of funded models will emphasize features that are culturally-responsive, gender-affirming, and aligned with the evidence-based consensus that peer connections and community care are essential components of a mental health ecosystem.**

Our goal is to support the implementation of a diverse set of program models that meet the specific needs of each unique school community. Peer-to-peer is broadly defined and inclusive of creative and innovative approaches to empowering young people to be active combating adverse outcomes in their communities and promoting connection, hope, and healing. **While we provide examples of models below, do not feel limited to fit your program into any specific predetermined model.**

**Examples of Peer-to-Peer Programs/Models - *Non-exhaustive***

<p><b>Peer Counselors - Peer Counseling Center/Program</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly trained core group of students providing first tier of social emotional support via active listening, empathy, prevention, and intervention resources.</li> <li>• Supervised by an adult clinical team member.</li> <li>• Peer counselors receive training and peer support certification.</li> <li>• Peer counselors receive stipends.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Example Programs or Provider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Oakland Peer Counseling Program</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://allcove.org/">https://allcove.org/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-los-angeles/local-education-training/peer-advocates">https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-los-angeles/local-education-training/peer-advocates</a> (<i>not mental health specific</i>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Youth Mental Health Peer Ambassadors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer ambassadors complete mental wellness literacy training or peer support certification.</li> <li>• Peer ambassadors become advocates and share information on campus on prevention and intervention.</li> <li>• Peer ambassadors work to de-stigmatize mental health narratives in the school community.</li> <li>• Peer ambassadors receive stipends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://sourcesofstrength.org/peer-leader-resources/">https://sourcesofstrength.org/peer-leader-resources/</a> - seen implemented via the peer counselor model at <a href="#">Garey High School in Pomona, CA</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://namica.org/nami-on-campus/">https://namica.org/nami-on-campus/</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Niroga Institute Restorative Justice Peer Support</a> as seen at <a href="#">El Cerrito High School</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Youth Transforming Justice</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Out of instructional time mental health club</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-led clubs that educate their communities about the importance of mental health and wellness.</li> <li>• Clubs are open to all students in the school community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Example Program or Provider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bring Change 2 Mind</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Active Minds</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Peer Leaders Uniting Students (PLUS) Program</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Restorative Practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative practices trauma-informed efforts that are founded on historical practices of community healing and accountability practiced by Indigenous and communities of color across the globe and for centuries.</li> <li>• Emphasize relationships, participatory decision making, meaningful engagement of those impacted by harm, and a growth-mindset to accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Restorative Practices: Beyond the Classroom: Integrating Circle Practices into Existing School Processes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Peer Judicial Panel - San Juan High School</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Relationship Centered Schools (Californians for Justice)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Building Positive School Climate Through Restorative</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circles are utilized as a core practice to build community, solve conflict, educate and inform, and respond to harm with the goal of healing and compassionate corrective action instead of compounding harm through indiscriminate punishment.</li> <li>• Circles are facilitated in non-hierarchical ways, emphasizing peer facilitation, and leveraging positive group dynamics with adult coaching to ensure equity in voices, belonging, and harm reduction.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Practices - Learning Policy Institute</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Restorative Justice Oakland Youth (RJOY) - Youth Circle</a></li> </ul>
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**Reminder on Student Involvement and Input:** *The Children’s Partnership believes in the power of youth to be able to contribute meaningfully in identifying the best solutions to the challenges and barriers that they face. It is a requirement of this grant application process that the grant applicant invites, engages, and incorporates student feedback into the programmatic narrative sections of the application. See the overview section for more information on how to incorporate student feedback into the application.*

**E. Proposed Program Model**

Please provide a detailed description of a proposed peer-to-peer youth mental health program to be implemented at your school site, if selected as a grantee. The peer-to-peer youth mental health program model should take into consideration and address the following:

- The social, economic, and cultural needs of your school community
- Support for specific populations within your school community experiencing increased risk
- The capacity or desired capacity of your school site staff and administration to support the implementation of the program
- Student voice and involvement in both the design and implementation of the program
- Complementary efforts on your school campus (especially those funded by existing state education or health programs such as but not limited to the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, Community Schools Initiative, or Medi-Cal) and how they are connected or aligned with your proposed model
- Proposed type of technical assistance needed (i.e., mental health or restorative justice club-based curriculum, California Peer Certification, A-G Youth Mental Health Course)
- Desired program milestones and outcomes over three school years

Do you have a technical assistance or community based program provider in mind that you would like to work with? If so, please list the organization name and contact information.

- If you listed a technical assistance provider above, are you currently working with them?

Please describe in detail how students were involved in your application process.

## F. Proposed Budget Narrative

Please provide an estimated budget based on your proposed program model. The budget total should equal the grant amount you are requesting and should extend over the span of three school years.

There are four core primary costs associated with building Peer-to-Peer programs in schools including:

1. Staffing: *Salary for a minimum of one clinically informed adult who will provide program oversight.*
2. Technical Assistance: *cost to enter a multi-year partnership with a technical assistance provider, or to adopt a curriculum or certification training.*
3. Student stipends: *proposed cost per hour for X number student counselors and ambassadors over the course of a school year x 3 school years.*
4. Operational costs: *proposed costs for marketing materials, engagement initiatives, facilities, swag, transportation, food etc.*

This may include:

- a. Affiliation costs
- b. Equipment and capital improvements (e.g., modifications to physical space to support practices and programs)
- c. Manual access for practices and programs
- d. Planning costs
- e. Specialized training (e.g., disability training, cultural competence, anti-racism)
- f. Staffing (e.g., benefits, contractors, resources to support mental health, wellbeing, and retention of a diverse workforce)
- g. Supplies (e.g., printing, toys, basic necessities for families)
- h. Technology (e.g., computers, virtual care platform, electronic medical record)
- i. Technical assistance
- j. Training costs
- k. Transportation (e.g., mileage reimbursement)
- l. Travel
- m. Other (applicants must define)

Note: Ineligible Expenditures

Ineligible expenditures for all tracks may include but are not limited to:

- a. Fundraising
- b. Taxes
- c. Debts, late payment fees, contingency funds
- d. Purchase or lease of vehicles

**Grant Award Reminder:** The total maximum award amount will vary based on program model, proposed budget, and school population size. The minimum award amount over the course of three years is not expected to fall below \$450,000 and not expected to exceed \$1,500,000. It's important to note that actual grant awards will vary and not all applicants will receive the maximum grant amount.

Estimated Minimum Award Amount	Estimated Maximum Award Amount
\$450,000	\$1,500,000

#### Part IV: Selection Process

Completed applications received on or before the close of the application will be considered through four stages between March 25, 2024, and May 17, 2024 (see below). Applicants will be considered based on eligibility, populations served, community need and overall strength of the application. The selection committee will consist of TCP staff and board members, youth advisors ages 15-21, and peer-to-peer technical experts and advocates. Finalists who make it to stage 3 will be notified in April 2024 if they've been selected to participate in finalist interviews. **Selected grantees will be notified via award letter in late May of 2024.**

The Children's Partnership (TCP) may collect additional applicant documentation, missing items, or omitted information during the review process. TCP will advise the applicant via email of any additional documentation that is needed along with a submission timeline. Failure to submit the required documentation by the date and time indicated may cause TCP to deem an applicant nonresponsive and may eliminate them from further consideration.

#### Application Milestones

Application Milestones	Dates
Stage 1: Eligibility and Minimum Requirement Review	March 25, 2024 - April 5, 2024
Stage 2: Selection Committee Application Review	April 8, 2024 - April 19, 2024
Stage 3: Finalist Interviews	April 29, 2024 - May 10, 2024

<b>Stage 4: Final Grantee Selection</b>	May 13, 2024 - May 17, 2024
<b>Award Announcements</b>	Wednesday, May 22, 2024
<b>Grantee MOU Completion</b>	Friday, June 14, 2024

**Accommodations**

The Children’s Partnership is committed to addressing any barriers to access in completing this application. To request any language or accessibility accommodations please reach out directly to The Children’s Partnership at [peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org](mailto:peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org) **Subject: Peer-to-Peer Applicant Accommodations (School Name).**

**Applicant Support and Inquires**

If questions or challenges arise, please reach out directly to The Children’s Partnership at [peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org](mailto:peerpilot@childrenspartnership.org) **Subject: Peer-to-Peer Applicant Support (School Name).**