



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

for ILCHF's "Bright Minds, Bright Smiles: Mental and Oral Health Integration Initiative" RFP

Welcome to the FAQs for this request for proposals (RFP). This document represents a compilation of numerous questions ILCHF has received related to this funding opportunity. If you have additional questions, please contact the respective ILCHF team member from the contact list at the end of this document.

This initiative seeks to provide 20 three-year grants of up to \$300,000 each (*for a total investment of \$6,000,000*) to sustain and enhance coordination of existing children's mental and/or oral health programs in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes, Local Health Departments (LHDs), schools offering healthcare services, or community-based organizations (CBOs).

Application Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due Date: All applications must be submitted online by 5:00 pm CDT on Friday, May 8, 2026. You can access the online portal here.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization Eligibility: Each Applicant must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> be a 501(c)(3) organization that has been determined by the IRS to be (a) a public charity described in Section 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code or (b) a governmental entity described in Section 170(c)(1) or 511(a)(2)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code; and be a Federally Qualified Health Center/Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike, Local Health Department, school offering healthcare services, or a community-based organization; and currently offer mental health services, oral health services, or both to children between the ages 0-21 enrolled in Medicaid.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My organization does not currently offer mental health services or oral health services to children in Illinois. Am I eligible to apply? This funding opportunity is available to organizations with established mental health services or oral health services for children in Illinois. Organizations are <u>not</u> required to currently offer <i>both</i> oral health and mental health services to be eligible to apply.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My organization does not bill Medicaid for mental health or oral health services. Am I eligible to apply? Your organization is not required to bill Medicaid to be an eligible organization. Your application should demonstrate that you provide services to children enrolled in Medicaid. This opportunity is not available to organizations that do not currently offer mental health services or oral health services to



children in Illinois. Organizations are not required to currently offer *both* oral health and mental health services to be eligible to apply.

• **What “community-based organizations” are eligible to apply?**

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are local public or private nonprofit organizations that are driven by community residents and address various needs within their community by providing wide-spread services and resources.

Examples of community-based organizations that are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity include, but are not limited to, care coordination and support organizations, community-behavioral health clinics, mobile dental clinics, community health coalitions, and others serving children who currently receive Medicaid.

If you have any questions about your organization’s eligibility for this grant opportunity, please contact the respective ILCHF team member from the contact list at the end of this document.

• **What is the healthcare “safety net” mentioned in the application?**

For the “Bright Minds, Bright Smiles” initiative, the Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation defines the healthcare safety net as providers and entities serving as the default system of care for individuals who are un- or underinsured, enrolled in Medicaid, or are from vulnerable communities requiring special services. Providers that offer healthcare services in the safety net include, but are not limited to, certified safety net hospitals, community health centers, federally qualified health centers, certified community behavioral health clinics, community mental health centers, local health departments, and schools offering healthcare services.

• **What financial information needs to be submitted?**

Please submit the following items:

- 3-year budget template – the document can be downloaded from our website [here](#).
- The Officer’s Certification Form signed by the CEO/President or Department Chair – this document can be downloaded from our website [here](#).
- Applicant organization IRS letter of exemption.
- Lead Organization Most Recent Form 990
- Lead Organization IL-AG 990
- Applicant organization most recent Audited Financial Statements
- Board of Directors’ list for applicant organization.

• **What if my organization does not have one or more of the required financial documents?**

If one of the required documents is not applicable for your organization, please attach a note in its place explaining why the document cannot be provided. Please also contact ILCHF Senior Program Officer of Oral Health & Other Initiatives, Marissa Sanders (MarissaSanders@ilchf.org) to discuss the submission of alternative financial documents.



- **Grant Timeline & Reporting Requirements:**

Grant recipients will be informed of a funding decision in August 2026. The grant period will begin on November 1, 2026, and end on October 31, 2029.

Grant funds will be distributed in three payments using the following timeline:

- Payment #1 on or before October 15, 2026
- Payment #2 on or before October 15, 2027
- Payment #3 on or before October 15, 2028

There will be three reports associated with this grant that will be due:

- November 30, 2027 (Progress Report)
- November 30, 2028 (Progress Report)
- January 31, 2030 (Final Report)

General Grant Application Questions

- **Please explain the application review process:**

Applications will first be reviewed by ILCHF staff to ensure compliance with the eligibility criteria and submission requirements outlined in the RFP. Following this initial review, a subset of applications will be forwarded to respective members of ILCHF's Grants Committee for further evaluation. Grants Committee members will then evaluate, score, and provide preliminary funding recommendations for the applications assigned to them using a standardized rubric developed specifically for this initiative.

Recommendations regarding funding or declining each application will be presented to the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee will determine which applications to recommend for funding and which to recommend for declination, and those recommendations will be presented to the ILCHF Board of Directors for final funding decisions at its Board meeting scheduled for August 2026.

- **How many, and when will grants be awarded?**

ILCHF intends to award 20 three-year grants of up to \$300,000 each through this initiative. In recognition of the importance of advancing both children's mental and oral health, ILCHF anticipates awarding approximately 10 grants focused on children's mental health and 10 grants focused on children's oral health. Applications that propose strategies integrating both mental and oral health will also be considered, which could result in fewer grant awards being made exclusively to either focus area.

Additionally, ILCHF intends to ensure geographic representation across its seven funding regions (see Appendix A) by awarding at least two grants in each region. To promote equitable access to funding opportunities, only one application will be accepted per organization.

- **What are eligible uses of grant funds?**

Funds from this grant are intended to be used to support general operations to sustain and enhance coordination of existing children's mental health programs or oral health programs. Examples of sustaining or enhancing existing mental and/or oral health services include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting ongoing current mental or oral health services through direct service provision to children.
- Acquiring additional equipment or completing minor construction projects to enhance the array of mental health services or oral health services provided to children.
- Hiring and/or training community health workers, care navigators, or care coordinators to assist families with accessing mental or oral health services and resources.
- Delivering mental and/or oral health education and integrated preventive care services to children and parents/caregivers during primary care visits.
- Co-locating mental and/or oral health services in primary care settings, schools, or community settings where children spend a significant amount of time.
- Establishing linkages between oral and mental health services in co-located settings.
- Enhancing family referrals to mental and/or oral health services and providers accepting Medicaid.
- Expanding a linguistically and culturally representative workforce that reflects community demographics.
- Addressing barriers to accessing and utilizing mental health or oral health services.

- **Will you accept applications in Spanish?**

Currently, ILCHF does not have the capacity to review an application submitted in Spanish. As a result, at this time, all applications must be submitted in English.

- **Our services extend beyond one ILCHF funding region. If we want to sustain/enhance services across our programs, should we still submit one application?**

To promote equitable access to funding opportunities, only one application will be accepted per organization.

- **Is there a cap on indirect costs?**

There is a 15% cap on indirect costs for the Bright Minds, Bright Smiles Initiative.

- **Will organizations that submit a proposal to fund existing services be as competitive as those that are proposing new services/programs?**

Under this RFP applicants are invited to submit a proposal indicating how funds will be used to support sustaining or enhancing existing mental health services and/or oral health services, and partnerships. You may review the scoring rubric to understand more about the scoring process used to evaluation RFP applications.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would a non-profit using a fiscal agent be eligible to apply? <p>Yes, nonprofits that use a fiscal agent are eligible to apply if they meet the eligibility requirements.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we already have an active grant with the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation, are we still eligible to apply for this grant opportunity? <p>Yes, current ILCHF grantees are eligible to apply for the Bright Minds, Bright Smiles Initiative.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do grant funds need to be spent equally over three years or is their flexibility in how requests can be allocated (i.e. can more funding be requested during year one for start-up costs)? <p>There is flexibility in how you may choose to allocate the requested grant funds over the three-year budget. Which may or may not be in equal increments.</p>

Project Specific Questions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organization have to serve the entire ILCHF funding region? <p>No. The goal is to fund organizations located and/or operating across each ILCHF funding region. Activities may be focused on a particular geographic area, county, or community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the grant period required to begin on November 1, 2026? <p>Yes. The grant period cannot begin prior to November 1, 2026, to account for the administrative processing and disbursement of grant funds to an organization following the proposal's approval by the ILCHF Board of Directors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we know if children are enrolled in Medicaid if we do not currently track their health insurance status? <p>One of the eligibility requirements for the Bright Minds, Bright Smiles RFP is that the organization must currently offer mental health services, oral health services, or both to children between the ages 0-21 enrolled in Medicaid. While there is no predetermined method for doing this, applicants must ensure they demonstrate their organization's ability to ensure they currently offer oral and/or mental health services to children ages 0 -21 who are enrolled in Medicaid.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community-based organizations required to accept Medicaid or is that just a favored preference of ILCHF? <p>Applicants are only required to demonstrate that their current currently offer mental health services, oral health services, or both to children between the ages 0-21 enrolled in Medicaid.</p>

- **Will these funds allow us to hire additional clinicians to meet the growing needs in the communities we serve and/or support increasing wages for current staff offering direct services?**

Grant funds from the Bright Minds, Bright Smiles Initiative are intended to be used to cover general operating costs, which includes supporting new and existing staff. For detailed examples, please review the RFP.

- **What do you consider mental health services? Is it limited to therapies?**

Existing mental health services are not limited to individualized clinical interventions. Existing mental health services can include a variety of mental and behavioral health services along the continuum of care model of promotion, prevention, intervention, and treatment.

Questions or Technical Assistance?

- For questions related to the “Bright Minds, Bright Smiles; Mental and Oral Health Integration Initiative” RFP please contact: Marissa Sanders, Senior Program Officer, Oral Health & Other Initiatives at MarissaSanders@ilchf.org.
- For RFP questions specifically related to mental health please contact: Christine Brambila, Senior Program Officer, Mental Health at ChristineBrambila@ilchf.org.
- For technical assistance related to this RFP please contact: Zach Wilder, Program Officer, Children’s Health, at ZacharyWilder@ilchf.org.

APPENDIX A

ILCHF Funding Regions

