

Grant Approval Memo



Grantee: Cook Inlet Native Head Start
Request Amount: \$25,000.00
Project Title: Expanding Mental Health Counseling for Students and Families
Grant Term: 2/19/2026 to 9/30/2026
Fund Source: FY26 Partnerships/Designated Grants
Trust Staff: Tina Voelker-Ross

Requested Motion:

The Program and Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$25,000 authority grant to Cook Inlet Native Head Start for the Expanding Mental Health Counseling for Students and Families grant. These funds will come from the Partnerships/Designated Grants line of the FY26 budget.

Staff Analysis:

- What does this project do?
This project will provide supportive funding for Cook Inlet Native Head Start to have a Mental Health Counselor on staff to serve their students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This counselor position will provide individual & group counseling sessions, offer family counseling and parent support to strengthen home-school partnerships, conduct crisis intervention and behavioral support planning, collaborate with teachers and staff to integrate mental health strategies into IEP goals and connect families with community-based mental health social services. Trust funds will contribute to the personnel costs for this position.
- Who is receiving the funds?
Cook Inlet Native Head Start serves 259 Alaska Native and American Indian families in Anchorage Alaska. This program utilizes "The Way We See" curriculum which is a research-based curriculum that is play-based and stresses the development of social, emotional, motor, physical, and cognitive skills with a focus on Alaska Native values and cultural enrichment. This curriculum prepares each child for kindergarten.
- Why is staff recommending this project?
This project will serve a population of families and children, many of whom qualify as Trust beneficiaries or are at risk for becoming Trust beneficiaries. The addition of a mental health counselor to the program will support early intervention strategies that improve student social-emotional functioning and reduce behavioral incidents, increase family engagement in education and IEP planning, reduce barriers to accessing mental health care for vulnerable students and families, and provide a system of support of mental health within the Head Start program.
- Will this be a multi-year project?
This proposal is for a single-year/12-month grant project.

Trust Five Year Funding History

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No Previous Trust Grants

Comp Plan Identification

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 1: Early Childhood & Youth	1.1 Promote practice-informed comprehensive developmental screening efforts and early intervention services	
Area of Focus 1: Early Childhood & Youth	1.2 Ensure accurate identification and support of social-emotional needs for children and their families, congruent with their cultural identification	

Trust Focus Area Connection

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Early Childhood & Youth	Early Childhood - Promote practice-informed, universal screening efforts and early intervention services	

Project Description (from grant application)

The Office of Head Start requires that each child enrolled in the program who has been evaluated and found to have a disability must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Additionally, Head Start is required to ensure that at least 10% of their total enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This ensures that children with disabilities have access to comprehensive services within the Head Start program.

Cook Inlet Native Head Start serves 259 Alaska Native and American Indian families in Anchorage, Alaska. Students with IEPs often face not only academic challenges but also significant social-emotional and behavioral health needs. Families of these students frequently experience stress, isolation, and difficulty navigating systems of care. Currently, CINHS does not have adequate internal resources to provide comprehensive mental health services tailored to this population. CINHS currently has 31 students with IEPs. More students have been identified with concerns.

Alaska students with disabilities are at higher risk of experiencing adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms. Families often struggle to access mental health care due to high costs, waitlists, transportation, or lack of culturally appropriate services. Without targeted mental health support, students may experience increased behavioral incidents, academic regression, and higher dropout rates. Families may disengage from the educational process due to stress or lack of support.

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This project will support the funding of a Mental Health Counselor to serve students with IEPs and their families.

Counselor responsibilities will include:

Providing individual and group counseling sessions for students with IEPs.

Offering family counseling and parent support to strengthen home-school partnerships.

Conducting crisis intervention and behavioral support planning.

Collaborating with teachers, special education staff, and administrators to integrate mental health strategies into IEP goals.

Connecting families with community-based mental health and social services.

Program goals:

Improve student social-emotional functioning and reduce behavioral incidents.

Increase family engagement in education and IEP planning.

Reduce barriers to accessing mental health care for vulnerable students and families.

Build a sustainable system of support for mental health within CINHS.

Performance Measures

From Grant Application:

CINHS currently has 31 students with IEPs. We will measure success through both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Proposed Performance Measures:

How much did you do?

- a. Number (#) of unduplicated Trust beneficiaries served during the reporting period, broken down by primary Trust beneficiary category.
- b. Number (#) students with IEPs receiving individual or group counseling services during the reporting period. Target 31.
- c. Number (#) of families participating in IEP meetings, counseling support, and/or school events during the reporting period. Target 25.
- d. Number (#) of families connected with community-based mental health and/or social services.

How well did you do it?

- a. Provide a narrative describing the timeline, activities, successes, challenges, and lessons learned during the reporting period.
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students with IEPs showing improved attendance. Target 75%.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students with IEPs showing increased classroom participation.

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- d. Number (#) and percentage (%) of families attending IEP meetings during the reporting period. Please describe how the percentage of families attending compares to the previous year. Target increase of 20%.
- e. Number (#) and percentage (%) of families reporting an increased confidence in supporting their child's mental health as a result of participating in the project. Target 70%.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students with IEPs who had a reduction in behavioral incidents. Target 60%.
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students with IEPs who demonstrated progress toward their social-emotional IEP goals. Target 70%.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students with IEPs referred to out-of-school mental health services during the reporting period. Please describe how the percentage of students referred compares to the previous year. Target decrease by 25%.
- d. Percent (%) increase in collaboration and communication reported between education and behavioral health staff. Target 30%.
- e. Two statements from family members describing the impact of the project on their student and/or family.

Sustainability (from grant application)

After this year, the position will be funded by Head Start.

Who We Serve (from grant application)

Cook Inlet Native Head Start serves 259 Alaska Native and American Indian families, with the goal of 26 IEPs per year. CINHS currently has 31 students with IEPs. More students have been identified with concerns.

This project aligns with AMHTA's mission to improve the lives of Trust beneficiaries, including:

Children and/or parents experiencing mental illness or emotional disturbances.

Families impacted by behavioral health needs.

Individuals at risk of long-term adverse outcomes due to lack of early intervention.

By embedding a mental health counselor within our program, we are addressing needs at the intersection of education, family support, and behavioral health—creating a more equitable and resilient pathway for children with disabilities.

Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)

Developmental Disabilities:	31
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Secondary Beneficiaries (family members or caregivers providing support to primary beneficiaries):	50
Number of people to be trained	50

Project Budget (from grant application)

Personnel Services Costs	\$25,000.00
Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$50,000.00
Personnel Services Narrative	The Mental Health Counselor supports the mental health and social-emotional well-being of children, families, and staff in Head Start programs. This role involves direct consultation, training, and collaboration with program staff and families to foster a culture of wellness, early identification of concerns, and access to appropriate services.

Supplies Costs	\$0.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Supplies Narrative	CINHS will supply the counselor with necessary supplies.

Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

Cook Inlet Native Head Start SECURED	\$55,000.00
Total Leveraged Funds	\$55,000.00