



**Executive Director's Staff Report**  
**April 17, 2025**  
**(February 21, 2025 – March 20, 2025)**

**BOARD / STAFF**

- **Executive Committee** – The committee held its regular virtual monthly meeting on April 8, 2025, at 2:00 PM to review the April 17, 2025, Board Meeting agenda and to receive updates on important staff activities since the March 20, 2025, Board meeting.

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS / ALLOCATIONS**  
**(CCSF, CMHF, Funding Partnerships & Initiatives)**

- **FY26 – 28 Early Childhood Social Emotional Development for Children Application Process** – Four Joint Review Teams (comprised of Trustees and Community Reviewers) reviewed 25 applications requesting more than \$4M for the \$1.5M in funding available for social emotional development funding opportunity. Of the 25 applications received, 7 are currently funded partners and 5 also receive funding from the St. Louis County Children's Service Fund. All four teams reviewed and ranked the Nurses for Newborn's application to norm their scoring and increase the reliability of the review process. Joint Review Teams met virtually to discuss and rank applications:
  - **Team A (Trustees: Andi Blaylock, Terrell Carter, Cassandra Pinkston;** Community Reviewers: Gina Datillo and Tay Butler ) – March 31 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM
  - **Team B (Trustees: Linda Grayson, Donna Schmitt, Mario Hamel;** Community Reviewers: Shavette Wayne, Alicia Grant) – April 1 from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
  - **Team C (Trustees: Ronald Griffin and Carolyn Jackson;** Community Reviewers: Carla Reid, Dr. Eddie McCaskill, Jerée Hoskins) – April 3 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM
  - **Team D (Trustees: Vander Corliss and Jancie Thomas;** Community Reviewers: Marlene Levine, Dr. Christine Crowder, April Walker) – April 11 from 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Brief bios for the Early Childhood Community Reviewers may be found at the end of this report. Two of the applications are for home visiting programs and the majority focus either on prevention or therapeutic interventions. Based upon available funding, it is anticipated that 10 applications may be awarded funding, which translates to the top three applications per Joint Review Team. This second Early Childhood grant application cycle demonstrates considerable improvement in the quality of applications received.

- **FY26 – 28 Early Childhood Partnership Application Process** – MHB received 1 application for the Mental Health Education for Parents/Caregivers opportunity and 4 applications for the Professional Development for Childcare Providers opportunity. Program Committee members Rob Poirier, Marcia Hayes-Harris, and Julia López will review the 3 partnership applications that met the funding criteria. The committee is scheduled to meet May 3 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM virtually to discuss the proposals. Funding recommendations will be provided to the full Board at the May 15 Board Meeting.
- **FY26 CCSF and CMHF Renewal Applications** – A total of 65 funded projects submitted renewals applications which have been reviewed by the project’s lead program staff and for which recommendations on funding continuation and approval of a COLA have been made. The final list of FY26 renewal applications will be presented for Board approval at the May 15 meeting.

**FEDERAL PROGRAMS / STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

- **System of Care St. Louis** – The System of Care St. Louis Implementation Team met to discuss White House Executive Orders that may impact federal funding for the program. The team developed scenario plans to help prepare for possible changes to program guidelines.
- **St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission** –
  - The Save Lives Now Advisory Group and Implementation Team, of which Jessica Meyers and Serena Muhammad are members, held its quarterly meeting to discuss the progress of the initiative. The City of St. Louis is on track to begin implementation of Focused Deterrence in April 2025.
  - The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Downtown District Captain has requested to partner with VPC to support youth events in downtown St. Louis this summer. Two planning sessions have been held between VPC, SLMPD, the Downtown Community Improvement District, and the City of St. Louis Office of Children, Youth, and Families. VPC plans to meet with the new Mayoral Administration to finalize details before proceeding with planned events.
  - The St. Louis City Recreation Department has requested to partner with VPC to support extended hours at four recreation centers this summer. One planning session has been held and a second meeting is scheduled for later in April. VPC plans to meet with the new Mayoral Administration to finalize details before proceeding with planned activities that are scheduled to start June 13, 2025.

**ADMINISTRATION**

- **FY26 Budget** – Staff has begun the development of budget workpapers
- **Accounting Software** – Accountant Deanna Shea is currently researching new accounting software for a potential future upgrade

- **Health/Dental/Vision Open Enrollment** – Staff will begin the open enrollment period for health/dental/vision benefits April 18. Health insurance premiums will increase 9% through Anthem MEWA with the new policy year effective June 1.

<b>OTHER</b>
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- **March 28** – Clinical Partnership Director Poli Rijos attended the **Rainbow Resilience: Advancing LGBTQ+ Wellbeing Summit** at Washington University. The two-day interactive professional development event dedicated to the wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ community offered two tracks of workshops, one focused on policy and advocacy and the other on clinical mental health care.
- **March 28 – Funder Friday with MHB** – Clinical partnership Director Dave Haasis and Prevention Partnership Director Lisa Potts participated virtually in this open office hour opportunity for nonprofits to meet with funders to discuss funding opportunities and respond to questions.
- **April 1 – St. Louis Early Childhood Implementation Planning Workgroup: Governance and Finance** – Cassandra and Early Childhood Program Director Denise Carter participated in the in-person planning session focused on reviewing a proposed governance model. The session provided updated projections for the amount of funding needed for a scalable three-year pilot.
- **April 1 – Children’s Services Fund Tax Executives** – Executive Director Cassandra Kaufman attended the bi-monthly meeting of Executive Directors of the 10 Community Children’s Services Funds in person at the Boone County Government Center in Columbia, MO.
- **April 4 – Collective Impact Forum: Managing Change, Complexity, and Conflict** – Program Assistant Cameron Saari participated in the webinar.
- **April 7 – 11 – Main Street Now Conference 2025 in Philadelphia, PA** – Lisa and Accountant Anjanette Washington attended the week-long conference designed to help local leaders improve and strengthen the social, civic, and economic fabric of their communities.
- **April 8 – 10 – Building Capacity for a Resilient Tomorrow Missouri’s First Disaster Behavioral Health Conference** – Poli attended the conference in Columbia, MO which focused on disaster behavioral health needs seen within individuals and community in various types after disasters (natural, human caused, and terrorism), along with considerations and lessons learned from past events.
- **April 8 – 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Missouri Children’s Trauma Network Training Summit** – Deputy Director Serena Muhammad attended the statewide conference in Columbia, MO. Keynote speaker Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General shared the ACEs Aware program which is a first-in-the-nation statewide effort to train over 20K primary care providers on how to screen for adverse childhood experiences and respond with trauma-informed care.
- **April 8 – 2025 Federal & State Budget Briefing for Missouri Funders** – Cassandra and Controller Susan Kabat participated in the webinar sponsored by Philanthropy Missouri.

- **April 11 – Maternal Health Conference – Black Maternal Health Week** at Barnes Jewish College of Nursing – Denise attended the full-day event.
- **April 16 – Preventing and Mitigating Financial Mismanagement and Fraud** – Cassandra, Susan, and Poli participating in the webinar sponsored by the Michigan Council of Foundations as part of Philanthropy Missouri’s Midwest Webinar Series. Financial and legal experts discussed fraud prevention measures, what to do when fraud or theft occur, due diligence, as well as employment law considerations.

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## **FY26 Early Childhood Community Grant Reviewer Bios**

### **Tay Butler**

Tay Butler is a Louisiana native. She is a mother of 3. She attends Saint Louis University. She’s a sports fanatic who enjoys spending time amongst others and laughing.

### **Dr. Christine Crowder**

Christine Crowder resides in the St. Louis metropolitan area. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, Master of Social Work, and Master of Arts in Teaching (Social Sciences) degrees at Grambling State University (Grambling, Louisiana). Additionally, she earned a Master of Arts in Education degree from Lindenwood University (St. Charles, Missouri). She has specialized certifications in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mental Health First Aid, and Addictions Study. In addition, I have a Doctor of Education degree, in Developmental Education (Student Development & Personnel Service) from Grambling State University (Grambling, Louisiana). She served as Team Leader for the St. Louis County CARES Humanitarian COVID-19 Response Fund grant. Currently, she works at Ranken Technical College as a Student Success Counselor and serves as an associate professor at Myrtle Beach College and counselor at WalknFaith, Inc.

### **Gina Dattilo**

Gina Dattilo and lives in the South City, Carondelet neighborhood. She is a 3rd generation American living in the same neighborhood as her family always did. She has been in the Early Childhood field for over 30 years working with after school programs and summer and children 0-5 years of age. She has taught at St. Louis Community College as an adjunct instructor for over 10 years with a focus on Early Childhood Education. She worked in child care as a teacher, director and support staff for 15 years. The last 15 years, she has been supporting children, families and other professionals that work with children by doing professional development and fundraising. She is a life-long learner.

### **Alicia Gant**

Alicia Gant has degrees in Early Childhood Education and Educational Technology. She is currently a certified Full Spectrum Doula with a certification in trauma informed care. She currently sits on the advisory council for Patient and Family Care (PFAC)-Women’s and Infants of BJC as well as on the advisory committee for Fit Food Connections. Alicia has completed several grant review periods with MHB in the past.

### **Je'Ree Hoskins**

Je'Ree Hoskins is a St. Louis city resident who is currently work for the Special School District of St. Louis County. Ms. Hoskins has been a reviewer with MHB for the last year and was a former Accountant and Grants administrator for the City of St. Louis. Ms. Hoskins has 2 minor children, one who has special needs and mental challenges and who has benefited greatly from childhood mental health services and resources in her community offered from the childcare center her son had attended. Ms. Hoskins has experienced the greatness of programs aimed at combating challenges related to Childhood mental health and eagered about their continued growth and success with spreading needed awareness and making a difference in the lives of St. Louis city children.

### **Marlene Levine**

Marlene Levin has a Master's degree in Child Development Child Care from the University of Pittsburgh and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Missouri St. Louis (UMSL). She lives in the city of St. Louis and directed a community-based family support and education center in the city for twenty-two years. She has been an adjunct instructor at local colleges and universities since 1989 and currently teaches courses in early childhood education and special education at UMSL. She is an advocate for mental health as she has personal experience with mental health issues and the systems of mental health from her family's support to their daughter who had diagnosed mental health issues.

### **Dr. Eddie McCaskill**

Dr. Eddie McCaskill is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor, Master Addiction Therapist, and a National Board-Certified Psychotherapist. He is certified by the American Psychological Association and has been licensed in the state of Missouri since 1991 as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Licensed Professional Counselor. Dr. McCaskill completed his undergraduate degree in Psychology from Pepperdine University, Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis, and his doctorate in Behavioral Health from Grand Canyon University. Dr. McCaskill's area of expertise is trauma, depression, and adverse childhood experiences.

### **Carla Reid**

Carla Reid is a social service professional and entrepreneur. She has served in various capacities within the social services field within the last 19 years. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience working with low income families and underserved communities. Currently, she works as a Community Response Project Coordinator with United Way. Carla Reid started her first business in 2011. She founded Elevated Men's Salon as a response to the lack of support of Black men. She believes that if Black men were supported and empowered then so will Black families, neighborhoods, and communities. Her second business, Empowering Our Peers, LLC, was started in 2017. This foundation's goal is to provide relationship based, client directed, goal focused financial coaching to low income families

### **April Walker**

April received her Early Childhood Education Certificate from Clover Park Technical College. She wanted to raise her children differently from how she was raised and give them a quiet, peaceful home. She also conducts workshops on Active Listening Skills, Appreciative Inquiry, Community Advocacy and Early Childhood Education focusing on Family Literacy. April is continually focused on community building and advocacy centered around racial equity and economic justice.

### **Shavette Wayne-Jones**

Shavette Wayne is a Neighborhood Transformation Manager with the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC). In this role, she acts as a liaison between stakeholders, businesses and City Departments. She is a connector and utilizes her network to promote community events and programs on a weekly basis. She has served as a Community Reviewer with the St. Louis Mental Health Board since 2018 reviewing a number of mental health, early childhood and after-school proposals. Shavette previously worked as a Neighborhood Improvement Specialist under the City of St. Louis' Neighborhood Stabilization Team and Executive Director of Hamilton Heights Neighborhood Organization, Inc.