



March 1, 2022

Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director  
and Community Development Citizens Advisory Committee  
Village of Oak Park  
123 Madison Street  
Oak Park, IL 60304

Dear Ms. Grossman and Members of the CDCAC:

On behalf of Hephzibah Children's Association, I am pleased to submit the following request for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the Village of Oak Park. As outlined in detail in the attached narrative, we are respectfully requesting \$525,000 from the Village of Oak Park ARPA funds. This funding will ensure our ability to support necessary programming for Oak Park children including our critical comprehensive therapeutic services for severely traumatized young children who reside in the Diagnostic Treatment Center at Hephzibah Home, as well as our high quality, affordable after school and summer day care program which serves hundreds of Oak Park elementary school children and their families on a sliding fee scale.

We are grateful for your thoughtful consideration of this request and welcome the opportunity to answer any further questions you may have regarding this request or our organizational needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Merry Beth Sheets". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Merry Beth Sheets  
Executive Director  
Direct Line: 708-649-7103  
E-mail: [mbsheets@hephzibahhome.org](mailto:mbsheets@hephzibahhome.org)

# Village of Oak Park

## ARPA Community Request Application

- 1. Project name (if you have more than one project, use a separate impact sheet for each):**  
Emergency Support for Severely Traumatized Young Children and Vulnerable Elementary School Children

**2. Contact Person:**  
Merry Beth Sheets, Executive Director

**Email:**  
mbsheets@hephzibahhome.org

### Agency Overview:

- 3. Please describe your agency and your organization's mission and/or operations**

Hephzibah Children's Association has a rich and esteemed history of caring for vulnerable children and helping families in need. Hephzibah is Oak Park's oldest social service agency, founded in 1897 when village resident Mary Wessels opened her home to two young boys. When a local orphanage was destroyed by fire, Mary took in dozens of orphans and made it her calling to care for society's most vulnerable children. She named the children's home after her mother as an expression of her mission to create a nurturing haven for children in need. What began with the group home has grown and expanded over the years to meet the changing needs of the community and clients. With a focus on keeping children safe by strengthening, healing, and keeping families together, we provide both prevention and intervention child welfare services. In addition to Hephzibah Home, which each year provides extensive care and therapeutic services for up to 60 severely abused and neglected children ages 3-11, Hephzibah also provides:

- family-based services for more than 200 foster care children and families who require extensive behavioral and psychological support;
- intensive case management and support services for nearly 300 low-income families in crisis due to poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, and other factors;
- after school and summer day care services for more than 700 Oak Park children;
- a Positive Parenting abuse and neglect prevention program;
- and an adoption program for children who cannot return to their biological families.

Hephzibah's mission is to help children thrive and families flourish through innovative, community-based programs. The organization maintains the highest level of professional accreditation by the National Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services and Hephzibah is recognized statewide for our comprehensive, transformative programming that far exceeds state requirements; a highly trained and experienced staff; and strong and engaged community support. Embedded in our mission and operations is a commitment to provide for needs of every child who comes to us; thus, our services far exceed state requirements.

4. For your most recently ended fiscal year, provide the following:

- a. Total revenues \$ 13,408,540\*
- b. Total expenses \$ 11,908,737
- c. Included in total expenses, how much was for salaries/benefits? \$8,905,680
- d. Total ending cash and liquid investments \$6,591,527\*\*

\*Revenue reflects \$1,164,390 PPP Funds and a one-time \$500,000 capital project donation.

\*\*FY21 revenue surplus included \$637,000 in restricted funding for capital improvements at Hephzibah Home. The remainder of the surplus went to agency reserves in accordance with our financial investment policies and fiscal best practices to ensure the long-term stability of the organization.

5. Are there similar non-profit or private organization that perform essentially the same services as your agency? If so, please list them.

Hephzibah Home is the **only program** in Illinois designated to care for the most extreme cases of abuse and neglect of young children ages 3-11. No other agencies in the DCFS system in the State of Illinois provide the high level of care and services that Hephzibah offers for this particularly fragile population.

Regarding our Day Care Program, although other after-school and summer camp programs operate in Oak Park, Hephzibah is unique for multiple reasons. The after-school program is the only program embedded in the Oak Park elementary schools providing essential after school, school holiday care, and full-time summer day care services for elementary school children on a sliding scale fee basis. The program is also the only program in the area that offers comprehensive social work services and supports for children and families enrolled in the program. Because our area of expertise as an organization is family and child wellbeing, we can provide a range of short- and long-term services designed to stabilize and strengthen families experiencing a crisis or stress in the family unit. In addition, during the height of COVID, when District 97 schools were closed for in-person learning, Hephzibah was one of the very few programs offering full-day, in-person remote learning supports for working families along with after school day care services.

#### *Collaboration & Community Partnerships*

6. Do you have partners that you are collaborating with to support this program financially or in other ways? Name them and the support you will receive from them.

Hephzibah is committed to providing a comprehensive continuum of care for all children in our group home. As part of our treatment model, we collaborate with nearly 40 community organizations to assure that the psychological, emotional, behavioral, physical, and educational needs of each child in our care are met. Our behavioral and mental health service partners include Thrive Counseling Centers, Mercy Home, Loyola Medical Center, Lurie Children's Hospital, Riveredge Hospital, St. Elizabeth Hospital, Rush Oak Park Hospital, Lakeshore Hospital,

and The Children's Clinic. Hephzibah maintains collaborative partnerships with many agencies including Collaboration for Early Childhood, Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park, Housing Forward, Oak Park District 97, Park District of Oak Park, Oak Park Township, Oak Park Youth Services, and more.

Hephzibah receives 75 percent of its funding from state and local government agencies including the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Human Services, the Illinois State Board of Education, Village of Oak Park, Oak Park School District 97, and Oak Park Township, and from program service fees. Twenty-five (25) percent of funding comes from fundraising activities, foundations, and corporate donations. Philanthropic support will be supporting a portion of our increased costs and lost revenue.

**Project Narrative:**

7. Please describe or attach to this form a description of your proposed program.

**Hephzibah's respectfully requests \$525,000 in ARPA Funding for Emergency Support for Severely Traumatized Young Children in our Diagnostic Treatment Center and Vulnerable Elementary School Children in our Daycare Program.**

As an essential service provider, Hephzibah has been on the front lines of providing support to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic in all our programs, and the pandemic has had a significant financial impact on operations. We have experienced tremendous increase in cost of doing business simply to keep our children and families safe as we comply with all local, state, and federal regulations as set by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Illinois Department of Health, the Cook County Department of Health, and the Oak Park Department of Health. In addition, Hephzibah's Day Care Program complies with all District 97 requirements. Hephzibah has also experienced a significant loss of revenue as an organization due to COVID, but particularly drastic losses of revenue in two of our core programs serving some of the most vulnerable children in our community – our Diagnostic Treatment Center (DTC) at Hephzibah Home and our Day Care program. Through the first six months of this fiscal year (7/1/21 – 12/31/21), the DTC is at 53% capacity and the day care program is operating at 63% pre-COVID service levels.

***Hephzibah Home Diagnostic Treatment Center (DTC)***

Hephzibah Home serves the most vulnerable young children in Illinois and is the only group home program in the state designated to care for the most extreme cases of abuse and neglect of young children, ages 3-11. All children are youth in care meaning that they are in the custody of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, all are extremely low income, and all are Medicaid recipients. The home's 16-bed Diagnostic Treatment Center (DTC) is the only designated diagnostic treatment center for young children in the state. Hephzibah's goal is to mitigate the long-term effects of trauma, to help children begin the healing process, and prepare them to return to family life with biological family members or in foster and adoptive homes. We provide the trauma-informed therapeutic care and support they need; a safe, stable, loving, and nurturing living environment; essential academic support; and comprehensive wraparound and enrichment services.

When children arrive at Hephzibah, they receive intensive stabilization and therapeutic care in the DTC typically for six to nine months. In addition, they receive a comprehensive assessment to analyze the individual impact trauma has had in a variety of areas of each child's life, including social/emotional wellbeing, physical health, mental health, educational progress, etc. Services include a structured, safe, trauma-informed environment; individual therapy from a variety of modalities, including cognitive-behavioral, play therapy and pet therapy; group therapy focused on social skill development and self-management; and psychiatric services. Our clinical and therapeutic staff at Hephzibah Home is trained in and utilize evidenced-based, therapeutic techniques including Trauma-Focused, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT). All staff are trained in and utilize the Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency (ARC) model to address the specific needs of the children. Hephzibah's trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy framework provides for expressive therapies including art, play, and pet therapy for children who are nonverbal, who have low expressive communication, socialization, and emotional abilities. Hephzibah utilizes evidence-based measurement tools to assess progress for all children and provide the therapeutic support they need to develop healthy behaviors and life skills. In addition, each child receives year-round educational enrichment, advocacy, and support; and comprehensive wraparound supports providing opportunities to engage in the community and participate in enriching childhood activities like swimming, camping, and field trips.

#### ***Hephzibah After School and Summer Day Care Program***

For more than 40 years, Hephzibah has provided essential after-school and full-day summer day care services for more than 700 Oak Park elementary school-aged children from over 500 families on site in each Oak Park public elementary school. We offer a nurturing, enriching, and dynamic day care experience for children in grades K-5 after school, on school holidays, and during the summer months. Our day care activities are designed to help children achieve their full social, emotional, and intellectual potential by fostering the development of a wide variety of skills, as well as social competence and a positive self-image. As part of delivering comprehensive program services, Hephzibah provides social work services to address the needs of children and families in the program. The children and families are from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, fulfilling a critical need in the Oak Park community for affordable, school-age day care. A vital component of Hephzibah's after school and summer day care program is the wraparound social work support providing a range of short- and long-term services designed to stabilize and strengthen families that may be experiencing a crisis or stress in the family unit. In addition to addressing the individual needs of the children in the program, the program's social worker provides support to at-risk families. The social worker works with the children addressing issues of physical and verbal aggression; developing self-control and managing impulses in large group settings; trusting adults; and developing healthy relationships with peers. She also helps identify and support academic needs that can be addressed in the day care setting through tutoring and homework help and she provides training to the day care staff on the social and emotional needs of the children served. Fees are assessed on a sliding scale and offset by financial aid when necessary to ensure that every family in our community has access to high-quality day care. Hephzibah's Day Care Program is a critical resource for working families, and especially during the pandemic, for single-parent households, and for essential workers. The program prioritizes admission for low-income families and more than one-third of those served are low-to-moderate income households.

## Approach/Impact/Goals

8. How does the proposed initiative address immediate or delayed public health, economic or other community harms resulting from or exacerbated by the Covid-19 public health emergency?

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provides mandatory funding to help states, counties, and cities cover increased expenditures, replenish lost revenue, and mitigate economic harm from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the plan specifically allocates funding for child abuse prevention and treatment, and for child-care support. Hephzibah's Diagnostic Treatment Center and Day Care programs have experienced significant financial deficits directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. ARPA funding for Hephzibah Children's Association will replace lost revenue and offset increased COVID-specific expenses that are negatively affecting the fiscal stability of two of our core programs. The significant increase in COVID-related expenses and lost revenue threatens the viability of critical programs which offer care and support to Oak Park's most vulnerable young children living in Hephzibah Home and for Oak Park elementary school children and families in our community.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, Hephzibah has spent **more than \$610,000** on COVID-specific expenses including, but not limited to:

- PPE for staff and families
- daily disinfecting and cleaning
- incentive pay for our essential workers
- upgraded technology for mobile workforce adaptations including cell phones, laptops, network broadband extensions and WIFI connections
- emergency financial support for at-risk families
- additional equipment and staff to meet COVID safety requirements
- costs associated with supporting e-learning needs for children and families

Many of the added COVID-related expenditures, specifically at our 24 hour/7 day per week group home, are mandated for the agency to meet all local, state, and federal health and safety requirements. These expenses will continue for the foreseeable future until the State of Illinois moves to pre-pandemic operations.

Compounding the increase in expenses, Hephzibah has experienced – and continues to experience – a significant loss of revenue in both the diagnostic treatment center and day care programs. **The projected lost revenue for these programs, based on our agency's six-month financials, is \$1,339,000.**

Our Diagnostic Treatment Center (DTC) at Hephzibah Home endured significant losses in revenue due to lower child census. Our contract with DCFS reimburses the organization per child served and the significant and ongoing complications related to COVID are the direct reason that our census numbers decreased. COVID caused a drastic halt or slowed progress for children in the child welfare system which led to a significant reduction of children moving into or out of needed services. As we began to slowly move children successfully out of the program, new children in need were not being moved into the services that they needed. Our average daily census in the DTC was 15 before the pandemic and is just 8 this year – a 53% reduction. In

addition, the COVID-related work force crisis inhibited our ability to introduce additional high needs children into the program for two months due to the lack of qualified staff. Subsequently, because of COVID stalling their therapeutic progress, the children who were referred to our program were some of the most severe cases we have ever experienced and to ensure the health, safety, and protection of the children and staff, we needed to bring in additional staff to work 1:1 with these highest needs children. Hephzibah's most experienced staff were needed to take additional shifts and work overtime, which drastically increased our expenses. While the operating expenses for maintaining our high-level of care are increasing, the lower census means significantly lower reimbursement. In addition, the daily mandated enhanced cleaning and sanitation requirements for this 24-hour, seven-days-per-week program and related expenses are fixed costs that the agency must absorb.

Hephzibah's After School and Summer Day Care Program has weathered incredible challenges resulting from the pandemic. The program closed entirely while schools were closed for in-school learning. The subsequent transitions between remote, hybrid, and in-person learning resulted in fewer children and families enrolling in the program and required Hephzibah to institute many expensive program modifications to protect children and staff, allow for social distancing, and ensure appropriate staff to child ratios. In 2019, before the pandemic, the program served 773 children. Since July 1, 2021, we have served roughly 625 children – a reduction in the number children served and a corresponding decrease in program revenue.

Current COVID-safety protocols and space availability limit the number of children accepted for enrollment in each school program, and to maintain required coverage and supervision, additional staff are required for each group of children. Two additional supervisory staff were hired to meet requirements, and, because staff who are exposed to COVID-19 were required to quarantine, more substitute staff members are needed. During the 2020-2021 school year when District 97 had both remote and in-person learning during the school day, Hephzibah provided a remote learning option for working parents, which required increasing the number of full-time staff to accommodate both remote learning and after school childcare. Additionally, during this time, the social/emotional/behavioral needs of children enrolled in the program were much higher than normal and required the regular attention and intervention of the program's social worker and supervisors.

The many changes resulted in high staff turnover, and the workforce shortage resulted in not having sufficient qualified staffed to open three of Hephzibah's eight, day care sites at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. Although we have been able to open one additional site, the remaining two sites remain closed, impacting over a hundred working families in Oak Park who need to secure safe, high-quality, affordable childcare for their children. **For the first half of the fiscal year, the day care program operated at 63% capacity, so revenue was 63% of budget. However, fixed costs remain and cannot be reduced, leading to a significant budget deficit. Ongoing COVID disruptions affect program capacity which further impacts the revenue stream, further adding to the budget deficit.**

**Hephzibah relies on the strong Oak Park community for support to ensure our ability to deliver a critical level of care and service and we need that support now more than ever. During this very challenging time, Hephzibah respectfully requests \$525,000 in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to offset \$1,339,000 in anticipated fiscal year lost revenue and increased expenditures as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hephzibah**

continues to incur approximately \$15,000 in additional monthly COVID-specific expenses, as well as more than \$100,000 in lost monthly revenue.

**With this funding we would be able to compensate for this unanticipated budget deficit due to lost revenue and increased COVID expenses and stabilize our programs. In short, this critical support will allow Hephzibah to continue these programs without threat of cutting or closing essential services for the most vulnerable children and families in our community.**

**9. Describe overall program goals**

The goals for the Diagnostic Treatment Center program are to: provide for the psychological, emotional, and physical needs of severely traumatized young children; integrate and deliver treatment and services that facilitate and support each child's recovery from abuse and neglect; prepare children for return to family life with biological family members or in loving foster and adoptive homes; and promote child and family well-being through an approach that is systemic, strength-based, family focused, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive.

Hephzibah's Day Care Program is committed to providing a nurturing, enriching, and dynamic day care experience for children and families, and feedback from parents, children and staff is critical to our ongoing program evaluation and development.

*Goals for children served:* Short-term goals are to improve social skills; improve language, literacy, and math skills; and increase the use of appropriate behaviors. Long-term goals include improving social-emotional development and increasing readiness for future learning, for example when transitioning to 6th grade.

*Goals for families:* Short-term goals are to decrease family stress, improve social support available to the family, reduce economic insecurity, and improve parenting skills. Long-term goals for families include increasing the likelihood that families can remain in Oak Park by relieving economic stresses that may force the family to move, preventing family dissolution, and preventing incidences of child abuse and neglect.

**Program Eligibility:**

*Strategic Goals*

**10. Can you describe a link with this proposed program and the Village Board's goals?**

Included in the Oak Park Village Board's June 2021 goals statement are tactics supporting goals related to community affordability, community safety, racial equity, diversity, and sustainability. Hephzibah Children's Association delivers services that have a direct impact on the lives of Oak Park children and families, and our organizational values reflect our commitment to racial equity and diversity. Young children ages 3-11 reside in the safe, loving Hephzibah Home for up to several years, after having been removed from an unsafe, abusive homes. All are residents of Oak Park, attend Oak Park District 97 schools, and utilize and participate in Oak Park community services, programming, and activities. The children living in the home are racially diverse with approximately 50 percent identifying as black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC).



Access to affordable, safe, high-quality day care is essential to meeting the village board's goals of ensuring that Oak Park is an affordable and safe community for children and families. Hephzibah's Day Care Program is a critical, high quality, and affordable resource for more than 700 children and 500 working families – many of whom are single parent households and essential workers. The children enrolled in Hephzibah's day care program are racially diverse, with nearly 53 percent of the children identified as BIPOC.

Hephzibah is celebrating our 125-year anniversary this year so has demonstrated sustainability in the community.

### *Community Benefit*

- 11.** Describe the residents impacted (#, age) and over what duration; Is this program for low- moderate income recipients?

Each year, up to 60 young children ages 3-11 come to Hephzibah Home, with a little more than one-half served in the Diagnostic Treatment Center, where they live for a minimum of six months to several years depending on individual need. All children are residents of Oak Park, and meet all state and federal poverty guidelines, and are Medicaid recipients.

Prior to the pandemic, more than 700 elementary age children (ages 5-12) and over 500 families were enrolled in the after school and summer day care programs. All children and families are residents of Oak Park. Day care services are provided on a sliding scale fee basis and approximately 30 percent of the families currently enrolled in the program qualify as low-to-moderate income.

### *Race Equity Impact*

- 12.** What racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address?

The children who reside in Hephzibah Home are youth in care of the State of Illinois and are referred to Hephzibah because they require the highest level of therapeutic care and support. Approximately 50 percent are BIPOC.

Hephzibah's Day Care services are available to all children/families enrolled in Oak Park District 97 schools. Prior to the pandemic, 50 percent of the more than 700 children and more than 500 families enrolled in the program were BIPOC. Currently, 53 percent of the children enrolled in Hephzibah's day care programs are BIPOC.

While there is a disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system, we welcome all children and families to Hephzibah and work hard to remove any and all barriers to accessing care, including ensuring we have a welcoming environment for all, staff who reflect the racial and ethnic make-up of those we serve, and sliding fee scale for our fee-

based programming. Per our core values, *we value, advocate for and support diversity throughout all levels of our organization. We embrace a respectful, multicultural, and inclusive environment for employees and the clients we serve. We are committed to a diverse and inclusive culture that solicits multiple perspectives and views and is free of bias, discrimination, and disregard for those who may be different from ourselves.*

13. What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? What racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination?

Hephzibah is committed to equity and inclusion throughout all of its programming, and more than 50 percent of the children and families enrolled in programming and receiving services identify as BIPOC. Access to safe, affordable childcare is frequently a barrier for low-income families of color. Many of these families could no longer afford to reside in Oak Park if they could not access Hephzibah's affordable, quality childcare programming, which is offered on a sliding scale fee basis. ARPA funds will be used to support the ongoing operation of these programs and the delivery of these services that are open and welcoming of all. There could be an immediate impact on the level of care, access to care, and quality of care provided to these children and families, should ARPA funding not be provided to support the stability of these Hephzibah programs.

## Measures & Reporting

14. Do you have program success indicators and progress benchmarks (list them)

Hephzibah utilizes three measurement tools to assess progress for children in the group home: the IM+CANS (Illinois Medicaid Comprehensive Assessment of Needs and Strengths) which is completed upon admission and then every six months until discharge; the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Checklist is completed 60 days after admission and then every six months up until discharge; and the Achenbach Brief Problem Monitor-Parent Form is completed monthly prior to the child being seen by the psychiatrist.

The IM+CANS is a comprehensive, lifespan tool for assessing the needs and strengths of individuals who require mental health treatment in Illinois. The IM+CANS integrates assessment and treatment planning into a single process. It contains a complete set of core items that assess function across multiple life domains such as risk behaviors, trauma exposure, behavioral/emotional needs, substance use, and cultural factors, as well as a physical health risk assessment. The IM+CANS incorporates quantifiable data and is useful in tracking progress and isolating areas to focus on in treatment.

The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales is used to provide information about the child's developmental level in the areas of communication, daily living skills, socialization, motor skills and maladaptive behavior. This information helps use to identify the correct programming to address the identified needs and is utilized to placement in the correct educational setting.

The Achenbach Brief Problem Monitor Parent form (BPM-P) is completed monthly and addresses children's functioning in the areas of internalizing, attention problems, externalizing, and total problems. The test is normed and provides information to evaluate responses to interventions designed to reduce problems and improve adaptive functioning. The repeated testing allows us to track quantifiable data to support client response to treatment and current level of functioning.

Hephzibah's Day Care Program seeks feedback and input from children, families, and staff in both formal and informal methods throughout the year. Additionally, the Day Care team sends a newsletter six times during the school year to all enrolled families. Programming and satisfaction surveys are distributed to families four times a year and several questions on the surveys are directed to child satisfaction. The surveys assess satisfaction with services, reductions in stress, and improvements in economic security, social support, and connections to community organizations. The social worker tracks achievement of goals set by parents. Families/children enrolled in the summer program receive a report card at the conclusion of the program. For children, many of the short-term outcomes are determined through observations by the social worker and Day Care staff, including improvements in social skills, increases in appropriate behaviors, and readiness for school transitions. Day care staff members provide input and feedback through a variety of ways including annual performance evaluations, training evaluation and suggestion forms, staff satisfaction surveys, and staff feedback sessions.

In addition to the program specific goals, Hephzibah has identified the following post-COVID recovery progress benchmarks that this funding will help support:

- Stabilization of agency finances to prevent further cuts to services and programming.
- Increase number of children served in Hephzibah's Diagnostic Treatment Center, eventually reaching pre-COVID service levels.
- Increase annual number of children and families served through after school and summer day care programs, eventually reaching pre-COVID service levels.

- 15.** How would you describe the impact to the community? How will these impacts be documented and evaluated that you are meeting the intended goals and community benefits? Please provide examples.

Children in the child welfare system were severely impacted by conditions caused by COVID – particularly children who required intense therapeutic care. Many of the systems and mechanisms that help children progress through placements were either temporarily frozen or significantly reduced during the height of the pandemic and young children traumatized by extreme abuse and neglect were left lingering in hospitals and psychiatric facilities long beyond medical necessity, their long journey toward recovery is stalled. Traumatized children have high needs and they require intensive support in order to progress toward healing. This delay in treatment prolongs their recovery, and potentially derails their recovery. The long-term physical, psychological, behavioral, and economic consequences of child maltreatment are well documented. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, long-term consequences of child abuse include improper brain development; impaired cognitive and social-emotional skills; lower language development; high-risk for medical and psychological

conditions; and alcoholism and drug abuse. The long-term behavioral and economic consequences show a strong correlation to higher risks of teen pregnancy, criminal behavior, dropout rates, and increased health, medical, child welfare, criminal justice, and special education costs. **These are the children who need Hephzibah Home the most and who would suffer further with both short- and long-term consequences if we had to decrease our services or shutter programs because of lost revenue that we have experienced.**

Hephzibah's Day Care Program is a critical resource for hundreds of working families living in Oak Park, and – especially during the pandemic – for single-parent households and our community's essential workers. Our program prioritizes admission for low-income families, and more than one-third of those served are low-to-moderate income households. Because of COVID negatively affecting the work force, Hephzibah was unable to sufficiently staff all eight of our after-school sites for the first time in our over 40-year history. At the start of the 2021-22 school year, more than 115 working families enrolled in three of Hephzibah's after school programs were suddenly left without any after school childcare for their young children, causing tremendous stress and financial upheaval. We have since made progress, opening one more program, but continue to face seemingly endless complications related to COVID and have not been able to open all site locations. In addition, the program has experienced program reductions and closures due to exposures and with the Omicron surge last month, these were a weekly occurrence, as well as when D97 implemented adaptive pauses which shut down our program completely. Our program has been performing significantly below revenue projections because of these program sites being shuttered, but we are unable to make any further cuts to fixed costs. The losses that we have endured this school year places our program in jeopardy. **We are the largest provider of affordable after-school care in Oak Park, and families – many of whom are struggling in our community – would be greatly impacted if our day care programs were forced to cut or close programming due to lost revenue.**

Hephzibah's positive impact on the community is significant and long-term. Ensuring that severely traumatized children receive essential therapeutic services, academic enrichment programming, and comprehensive wraparound supports and services results in healthier children who have fewer lifetime emotional, behavioral, and medical problems. As cited previously, there are significant and costly long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect. When children receive the care they need and can transition to loving, family-based care, the community experiences many economic benefits including lower health care costs, and lower costs for medical care, education, child welfare service, and criminal justice.

More than 500 Oak Park families rely on Hephzibah for safe, affordable, high-quality, childcare that is readily available and easy to access. Families who do not have this, may be forced to relocate to communities where affordable services are available. Having dependable, high-quality, affordable day care, stabilizes the community, lessens stress on families, and ensures that children are safe and well cared for while their parents/caregivers are at work. More than 150, low-to-moderate income Oak Park families would be adversely affected without Hephzibah's Day Care Programs.

We will continue to measure how our children and families are impacted by closely monitoring this data, including the number of children served in the DTC and day care, as well as the number of after school sites we are able to operate for the remainder of this school

year, our ability to provide summer programming and certainly what will be possible after school next year.

### **Project Cost**

16. Total Project cost: \$4,322,607                      Total ARPA request: \$525,000  
(\$1,339,000 in lost revenue)

17. Provide timetable when funds will be spent

All funds will be expended immediately upon receipt.

18. Do you need all the grant funds in one distribution?

Yes.

### **Project Sustainability**

19. Do you have a plan to keep this initiative in place once the one-time ARPA funds are used? Please describe.

Both programs – the Diagnostic Treatment Center and the Day Care program – are essential programs of the organization and we have every intention of continuing to offer these necessary services after ARPA funds are used. ARPA funds will be used to immediately offset the current, unanticipated COVID-related fiscal year budget deficit. Hephzibah organizational leadership is working on a multi-tiered approach to limit further agency risk in each of these programs and to increase revenue streams. As COVID restrictions ease, our corresponding COVID-specific expenses will continue to decrease across the agency. In addition, with anticipated increased program referrals for the diagnostic treatment center and increased program enrollment in our day care program, our corresponding revenue levels for each program will increase. We are hopeful that this challenging combination of increased expense and decreased revenue will not continue at the same level as it has the past two years, but we are making strategic decisions that will help to ensure our stability over the long term.

### **Timetable:**

20. Provide a comprehensive timeline to implement your proposed program and what is the duration of the program

Hephzibah programming is ongoing and yearround and this emergency funding will be immediately utilized to offset increased costs and lost revenue.

### **Other:**

- 21.** If you don't receive the funds, what are the impacts and will the program not occur in the future? What would be your plan to get this program running without ARPA assistance?

In the absence of ARPA funding, Hephzibah faces an ongoing and significant reduction in services, particularly affecting Oak Park working families served by our after-school program and the community's most vulnerable children residing in or awaiting placement at Hephzibah Home.

Ensuring the stability of Hephzibah Home and our Diagnostic Treatment Center is essential for the most severely traumatized children in the State of Illinois because they require a safe, supportive, and therapeutic place to live in order to stabilize and heal. A loss or reduction in services for these children, would result in them not receiving the care they so desperately need, remaining in unstable, often unsupportive living arrangements that cannot meet their needs, and lingering in psychiatric hospitals for much longer than is medically necessary (there are currently 57 Illinois youth in care in psychiatric hospitals beyond medical necessity). In addition, there are many increased risks to the community in the form of higher costs for health and medical care, education, crime prevention, and more.

Service reductions to our day care program might include the continued shuttering of two after-school program sites and the potential closure of additional sites of Hephzibah's after-school and summer day program, which typically serves more than 700 children attending Oak Park District 97 schools. A significant portion of these families are single-parent households, and more than one-third are low-to-moderate income who pay on a sliding scale fee basis. Many are essential workers who do not have the option of working from home and need reliable, high-quality childcare to maintain employment. The further loss or reduction of stable, affordable childcare in Oak Park will have a profound impact on Oak Park families and may result in loss of employment and increased stressors in the household, placing vulnerable, school-aged children at greater risk.

To mitigate the ongoing expenses and loss of revenue, Hephzibah's Board of Directors and Leadership Team continually evaluate opportunities and strategies to alleviate risk and increase revenue to support these programs. In addition, we continue to seek private philanthropic support to maintain our current high level of care and services.

- 22.** Can your program or a portion of your project wait until January 2023 to coincide with the anticipated next phase of community ARPA requests? What would be lost if this program waited until 2023? Do you have a plan to make up this loss?

No. Hephzibah seeks emergency funding to meet critical, immediate needs. If funding is not granted this fiscal year, our programs will not have the relief they need to stabilize and rebuild lost revenues. ARPA funding now will allow us to focus our attention on pursuing these additional avenues of support and the time we need to successfully recruit, train, retain, and place necessary staff in each program while slowly increasing our program participation and corresponding revenue.

**23.** Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for this program? Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for other programs?

Hephzibah's Diagnostic Treatment Center and Day Care Programs are based in and exclusively serve Oak Park residents. Hephzibah is not seeking ARPA funding from other agencies or for other programs.