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Supporting Families Together Association Awarded \$1 Million for Preventing Expulsion Among Wisconsin's Children Ages Zero to Five

(Madison, WI) – Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) was awarded a one million dollar grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health on October 24, 2018. The Community Impact Grant, which provides \$1 million over five years, will support SFTA's project *Preventing Expulsion Among Wisconsin's Children Ages Zero to Five*.

The project's goal is to improve health outcomes by implementing intervention strategies in early childhood care education to address disparities in rates of expulsion among young children in Wisconsin. These early expulsion experiences can have significant harmful impacts on a child's trajectory for life, including various health outcomes. Early expulsion negatively affects social emotional health because it interrupts children's learning of key skills, like self-regulation and forming relationships, and prevents the early identification or diagnosis of underlying behavioral or mental health issues. Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes and risk incarceration.

Through this project, Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) and a diverse group of partners including the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Child Care Partnership, 4C for Children and academic partners Dr. Katherine Magnuson of the UW-Madison School of Social Work and Dr. Christine Neddenriep of the UW-Whitewater, Department of Psychology, will adapt for Wisconsin an existing and effective model that supports children, families and early educators. This model addresses challenging behaviors, traumatic experiences and implicit bias to reduce expulsion in the early education system and the disparities associated with it. By preventing expulsions in early childhood through a systemic model of supports, the project will create better health and social emotional development outcomes due to increased positive social emotional behaviors, increased early identification of behavioral or mental health needs and decreased disparities among children of color and children of lower socioeconomic status.

Lana Nenide of the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health says, "Caregivers, both at home and in early education, need to be supported in the work they do so that all children can thrive in early care and education settings, because, ultimately, it is the *adult's* decision, not the *child's* behavior that results in preschool expulsion."

Says Magnuson, "This is a great chance to make a difference in not only in children's early development, but in ways that will have lasting impact on their health and well-being."

This project is one of four 2018 Community Impact Grants funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. The projects were selected for their potential to create conditions, systems and policy solutions that lead to equitable and sustainable improvements in health.

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