



## House Public Safety and Violence Prevention Task Force Testimony Subject Matter: Restore, Reinvest and Renew (R3) Program Grantees

On behalf of Metropolitan Family Services, our Board of Directors, and clients, we thank Task Force chairs, Representative Ford and Representative Hurley and members of the Task Force for the opportunity to offer testimony about our Restore, Reinvest and Renew program.

For over 160 years, Metropolitan Family Services has been a human services leader, empowering families and communities to learn, earn, heal, and thrive. We helped to empower 136,675 children and families in 2021 across our geographies and connected 32,501 individuals to additional resources, either inside Metropolitan or to our partner organizations. At our Southwest Center sites, we helped empower 16,691 clients.

In July of 2021, together in leadership with the Blue Island Robbins Neighborhood Network (BIRNN), the Southwest Center was awarded \$1,169,729 to launch our Renew, Reinvest, Restore (R3) initiative after receiving an executed agreement with ICJIA. Metropolitan's initiative seeks to mobilize and expand resources to address gaps in services for residents living in Blue Island, Robbins, Posen, Dolton, Ford Heights, and Harvey.

Immediately after obtaining our executed agreement, we have actively pursued a grassroots community level approach to building trusting relationships with these organizations in Blue Island, Robbins, Posen, Dolton, Ford Heights, and Harvey through listening first and employing a fluid, adaptable approach to partnerships and service delivery based on what the community tells us. Our goal remains strengthening capacity and coordination across multiple systems in order to optimize care and resource allocation. Our R3 grant is an opportunity to build on the work of BIRNN and other community-based organizations to ensure families that can benefit are identified and thoughtfully linked to services and resources that can address their complex needs.

### **Metropolitan Family Services R3 Program is organized around five key service delivery areas:**

- **Legal Aid Services:** services will include bilingual legal representation, navigation, and advocacy across multiple legal areas including housing law and other areas impacting diverse populations including but not limited to returning citizens, immigrant populations, and individuals who have experienced domestic violence, human trafficking, and elder abuse; pro-bono assistance implementing a community lawyering approach.
- **Workforce Development:** workforce development model that includes financial coaching, job coaching, intensive case management, employment placement, retention support and post-placement financial planning
- **Community Navigation:** comprehensive community outreach and engagement to identify those who may not be linked to needed resources. Community navigators will provide navigation and case management across sectors and providers to ensure greater coordination and service access/completion.
- **Behavioral Health Services:** providing access to trauma informed counseling, psychiatric care, individual, family, and group interventions, including anger management groups for individuals who are either mandated through court or through referrals.

The R3 initiative is built on a model honoring our commitment to **community capacity building and sustainability coaching** for smaller community-based organizations. We recognize they are uniquely qualified to work within these communities because of their historical investment and hyper-local grassroots impacts. We also recognized they have faced similar historical barriers to organizational growth as those barriers faced by individuals in their communities, namely resource allocation. We have employed extensive grassroots outreach to ensure community awareness and connection with strategic community partners. Our community navigators have attended any and all community events shared with us by pastors, elected officials and other community leaders. This outreach has already begun to establish strategic partnerships with community providers leveraging each other's resources and expertise to provide a comprehensive approach for families with complex needs.

Strategic Community Partners	Expanded Service Provision
Roseland Ceasefire	R3 SW provides wrap around services to families impacted by community violence, including housing assistance, case management and workforce development services.
Salvation Army of Blue Island	Housing and Bill Payment Assistance
Solid Ground Behavioral Services	Behavioral Health Services for children aged 5-13 diagnosed with Autism

Metropolitan Southwest’s R3 grant is designed from the start with **designated funds to award community partner subgrantees to provide targeted and complimentary services** that respond to the needs of R3 participants and the unique landscape of the southwest suburbs. We have already submitted five subgrantee award recommendations close to \$300,000 to current and active BIRNN members. Awardees will provide services that fall in one of five R3 focus areas including civil legal aid, economic development, reentry, violence prevention, and youth development. Metropolitan will provide subgrantees with critical organizational supports including technical assistance and grants management empowering our partners with time and resources to develop their own administrative infrastructure. R3 SW collaborates with five partners to ensure participants are thoughtfully linked to services and resources that address multifaceted needs:

Organization Name	R3 Program Area
iCan Dream Center-Project Thrive	Workforce & Youth Development
Pathlights/Catholic Charities	Violence Prevention (Older Adult and Caretaker Violence Prevention)
Blue Island Public Library	Early Intervention (Early Childhood Literacy-Family Literacy and Community Building)
CLC Hope Center	Workforce Development/Economic Development
Together We Cope	Re-Entry (Housing Support)

Due to the multi-year funding model, we are just getting started. We have intentionally designed our program with flexibility in mind so that it is responsive to community needs as they unfold, and we can build on trusted relationships. Over the course of the next few years of funding, we have plans for additional subgrantees and additional communities.

Initial outreach by our R3 Program Supervisor Tranese Perryman illustrates the impact of this model and the potential impact R3 programming can have in the lives of families living in Chicago’s south suburbs.

*“There is no better example of our commitment to true collaboration than our rapidly expanding relationship with Ceasefire Roseland. This partnership, which began as a potential linkage and referral relationship, has grown significantly even in a few months. We have not only been able to honor each party’s individual expertise but have also creatively leveraged our resources to provide comprehensive services to individuals and communities impacted by violence. This relationship began by our R3 Program Supervisor accompanying Ceasefire Roseland staff to a follow up meeting with the family of a homicide victim in one of our targeted communities. During this visit, she had the opportunity to learn from both the victim’s and alleged perpetrators families, learn about the needs and to assess how R3 services could be supportive. We were able to put services in place for the whole family, initially focused on safety and housing.*

*With violence in some of our targeted communities rising (Dolton, Robbins, and Harvey specifically), we started to explore with Ceasefire Roseland the opportunity to help build their workforce capacities to increase violence mitigation efforts in these areas. In December 2021, we launched a collaborative workforce development arrangement to recruit, train and support community members to potentially gain employment with Ceasefire Roseland. These recruits are connected with our MFS R3 Career Coach, participate in Job Readiness training, and are then paid while they gain hands on experience with Ceasefire Roseland for a 16-week period. All recruits receive support from the Career Coach during this period. In addition, as R3 participants, they receive whatever additional services may be needed to help them remain successful in this training program and to ultimately gain sustainable employment in the area of violence prevention.*

*In addition to the service referral and linkage relationship and the workforce collaboration, we are also providing Anger Management groups onsite at Ceasefire for court mandated/self-referred clients. This has been growing exponentially as other community members have been coming voluntarily to increase their own skill development.”*  
 --Meghan Kelly, Program Director

We have long awaited the official launch of this timely service availability in Blue Island, Robbins, Posen, Dolton, Ford Heights, and Harvey and more. If you’ve heard nothing else, I hope that you take to heart how excited we are

about the opportunity R3 grant funding provides to mobilize, provide and contribute to the expansion of existing services in our communities. This is only phase one and we look forward to a long-term partnership to ensure the next many phases meet unique participant demands and build upon the existing social services landscape in the south suburbs.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share with you.