

March 14, 2019
Richard Whitley, Director
Nevada Department of
Health and Human Services



BRINGING THE GIFT OF TIME TO FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

Dear Mr. Whitley,

The Northern Nevada RAVE Family Foundation (RAVE) would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for being a pivotal supporter and working partner since our program's inception. RAVE indeed relies upon the support of the State for the continued success and operation of our respite care programs that we provide to families of children with disabilities in Northern Nevada. It is imperative, however, that RAVE addresses several inconsistencies and significant issues with the process of funding grants through DHHS for the SFY20-21 cycle.

From a technological and logistical standpoint, the process of submitting our grants this cycle seemed unnecessarily cumbersome. There were several discrepancies and contradictions that emerged from the RFA document. While staff did respond to submitted questions regarding these issues in a document posted on the GMU website, no steps were taken to actually amend the RFA for clarity, including grammatical and punctuation issues. When submitting the grant, we were asked to e-mail the RFA, the 11-page narrative, and all necessary attachments. Receiving grants in an unsecured, oftentimes unreliable, medium greatly increases the chance for error on both the end of the State and the grantees. RAVE had submitted our grants well in advance of the deadline, but received no confirmation of receipt until after we attempted several inquiries the day of the deadline. For one of our grants, no confirmation was given until 15 minutes prior to the deadline.

Most importantly, there appears to be a distinct lack of consistency in the reading, scoring, and ultimate determination of the distribution of funds to grantees. For example, RAVE received the #1 ranking for the grant we submitted under the Fund for Healthy Nevada (FHN) – Respite Care funding priority. The GMAC subcommittee, however, determined that nearly \$24,000 requested from our grant be reduced due to these funds not being "direct service." Not only was this unanticipated and not included as a metric to be used by the subcommittee at any point during the RFA process, but the determination of what constitutes "direct service" was made by the subjective viewpoints of the members of the committee. No defined areas of what fits under the category of "direct service" were distributed. Regardless, it is quite difficult for small, community nonprofits to find funding for operational and indirect costs, as most local foundations will not fund operational costs. The continued operation of our organization is essential for us to continue to deliver direct services and we (among many other organizations) rely upon those funds from the State.

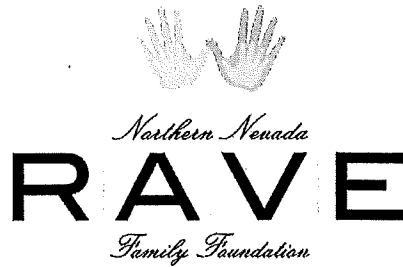
The GMAC subcommittee for the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) saw our grant only reviewed by 2 members of the 5-person committee. Having only two reviewers greatly increases the chance that the subjectivity of one reviewer will skew the resulting score. This is especially frustrating when you have 3 other members that could and should review every grant as well. To this point, RAVE received a 94 from one reviewer and a 51 from another, an astounding 43-point difference. RAVE's grant written for the FHN was quite similar in composition; that grant received scores of 90, 86, and 84. Had our grant been reviewed by all 5 CTF subcommittee members, the scores we received from the FHN reviewers lead us to believe that our grant would have scored much higher, with a sample size of four high scores and one quite low score. As is, our CTF grant received a 72.5,

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meaning our grant did not score high enough to be funded by the subcommittee. RAVE certainly understands that there are more requests for funds than funding available, but this means that having a transparent, fair, and consistent process for determining the distribution of funds is paramount. Considering that the cycle for funding is two years, when the process is flawed, it creates a massive impact on the livelihood of the local organizations applying for funding. In the case of many smaller nonprofits, they may not survive. It is even more disheartening when this is due to issues with the granting process and not with the services the organization provides to the community.

Over the past five years, RAVE has seen significant growth in the number of children we have served at the RAVE Family Center and through the Jr. RAVE and Teen RAVE. We have seen a growth rate of over 300% during this time period, with an increase in children and families served each year. By the end of Quarter 2 in FY19, we have already served 208 children and 121 families in our RAVE Family Center, providing 120 respite sessions. We are also in the process of opening a new Jr. and Teen RAVE Center adjacent to our current RAVE Family Center to give our juniors and teens their own physical space. And, RAVE is expanding our services to satellite locations in Carson City and Elko, two rural locations that do not have analogous, center-based respite services. Our organization's marked success shows that we have the capability to achieve the mission and goals of the funding priorities of the DHHS. We are a thriving organization ready to expand and bring respite services to areas that currently do not have them. We need the support of the State of Nevada to make this a reality and an objective and reliable granting process to make this a reality. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Korine Viehweg
Executive Director

Northern Nevada R.A.V.E. Family Foundation

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