



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Grants Awarded to Help Address Staggering Needs to
Care for Kids and Support Learning Amidst COVID-19 Disruptions**

Denver, CO – Caring for Colorado Foundation today announced \$800,000 in grants to support the care, education and well-being of children and youth as childcare and schooling continue to be disrupted by COVID-19. A survey of school superintendents across Colorado ([link](#)), released last week, shows a high level of concern about the loss of reading skills in kindergarten through third grade students, and for the mental health of middle and high school students. The funding from Caring for Colorado is directed to agencies serving children, youth and families living in communities that are most affected, with a deep focus on children and youth of color, those living in families with low income and others facing significant barriers, such as homelessness.

“Disengagement from school and social networks has long-term consequences – academically, socially and emotionally. We know that Black, Indigenous and Hispanic students and students in low income families are being hurt the most,” said Linda Reiner, President and CEO, Caring for Colorado Foundation. “The 100+ requests for funding that we received tell a stark story; the needs are absolutely staggering. Even with our board increasing the amount of funding we are able to provide today, and Colorado lawmakers approving millions of dollars in one-time support for childcare providers and remote learners last week, so much more is needed. The public and private sectors need to commit to work together for the long-term, providing flexible support to help ensure we don’t sacrifice a generation of our young people.”

With a focus on building a healthy future for Colorado children, youth and families, Caring for Colorado is providing grants to 40 schools, after-school programs and community-based organizations in 25 counties across the state. These organizations highlighted the many barriers to student engagement since the transition to remote and hybrid learning, including no or weak internet connections; inadequate technology; caregiver stress; disrupted home environments; hunger; and caretaking responsibilities for younger siblings.

Grants from Caring for Colorado will bolster support in these key areas:

- **Well-Being.** From social connections, mental health support and adequate nutrition to after-school care, enrichment programs and activities, the well-being of children and youth is foundational to academic growth and healthy development.

Examples from organizations receiving grants:

- [Sun Valley Youth Center](#) mentors make “Hey buddy, are you okay?” calls when youth they work with are absent from remote or in-person school, providing them with support to stay engaged in school.

- In Mesa County, [Riverside Educational Center](#) provides in person and virtual after-school tutoring, social-emotional support through tutors and peer groups and resources and referrals to address mental health challenges.
 - Through its Justice Fund, [Empower Community High School](#), a charter school in Aurora, provides emergency funds and mental health support to families facing illness, job loss or eviction to stabilize the family and strengthen the ability of children and youth to focus on school work and personal goals.
- **Learning.** Individual and group tutoring, coaching and mentoring through safely distanced in-person and remote settings. Providing safe, structured and quiet spaces to help students focus on their online classes and studying.

Examples from organizations receiving grants:

- In Jefferson County, [Gold Crown](#) Learning Coaches help students to navigate learning platforms and complete assignments while weaving in social interactions and mental health support.
 - A community-based program in the Roaring Fork Valley, [Stepping Stones](#) provides tutoring and mentoring in a safe space to support student mental health and academic achievement.
 - Serving low-income Spanish-speaking immigrant families, [Aurora Community Connection](#) family resource center provides licensed educators to work individually with children throughout the day.
- **Technology.** Adequate technology and internet access are being provided, together with support to help students and families learn about technology and navigate learning platforms.

Examples from organizations receiving grants:

- After discovering students attempting to do their schoolwork on cell phones, the [Pueblo Boys & Girls Club](#) learned to ask more specific questions, like “What kind of device do you have? How many people in your house are sharing that device? How do you connect to the Internet?” to make sure students have adequate technology for remote learning.
- Even as local schools provided Chromebooks to students this year, many families didn’t have internet access, so [Full Circle of Lake County](#) is paying for internet access for dozens of families.
- After hearing from many of the families they serve in the Montbello community that they had quickly given up trying to help their students with online learning, the [Struggle of Love Foundation](#) provided “techpacks,” giving kids adequate technology resources paired with safely-distanced learning labs.

See a listing of all grantees [here](#) and learn more about Caring for Colorado Foundation at caringforcolorado.org.

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Caring for Colorado Foundation is a grantmaking foundation dedicated to creating equity, health and well-being for Colorado’s children and families. We want to help make Colorado the best place for kids to grow up, with every child having love, stability, support and opportunity.