
Sponsor: Public Health

Meeting Date: 8/16/2022

Title: Authentic Connections Program Fee Adjustments

File Number: 2022-411

Background and Rationale:

Since 2004, Public Health's Healthy Communities Division, has conducted violence prevention work with three initiatives: the Wakanheza Project; Making Authentic Connections; and Creating Welcoming Environments. Each program worked to address social inclusion, healthy relationships and the prevention of violence with a specific audience. The programs have been successfully implemented in libraries, governmental, nonprofit and public sector agencies throughout Ramsey County. The three initiatives promote racial and health equity and inclusion as tools to create violence interventions. In 2019, the three initiatives were reviewed and found to contain overlapping content. The three initiatives were merged and renamed as "Authentic Connections" and continues to promote meaningful connection with others as a protective factors in health, such as individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events.

Authentic Connections is a community-based violence prevention program that utilizes the six key principles of environment, bias, empathy, culture, power and connection which are rooted in improving social connection to support individuals, organizations, businesses and communities in reducing, addressing and de-escalating stressful situations in public settings. Authentic Connection principles are supported by research, which shows when there is an increase in social connection, there is a decrease in incidents of violence. When individuals, families, community members or work colleagues feel secure and connected in their lives, they can better thrive in various environments and achieve positive health outcomes.

This is accomplished by inviting individuals to consult, collaborate and be involved in making small changes by reviewing the following interactions:

- How do individuals see themselves or their role?
- What does the physical environment do to promote or inhibit positive interactions?
- What are the predictable or repeated stress points?
- How can people be more intentional in creating interactions to promote connection and belonging?

The core principles of Authentic Connections can be applied and are effective in many different settings.

Levy-funded Public Health staff collaborate with agencies within Ramsey County to tailor individual goals and strategies of the program to maximize the needs of the organization. This collaboration includes conducting training sessions, creating a program implementation plan and providing ongoing consultation as the work progresses, expands and evolves.

Over the past three years, Public Health received numerous requests to provide Authentic Connections training to other municipalities, nonprofit organizations and private entities in greater Minnesota and nationwide. Since staff are levy-funded, Public Health has not been able to offer training to agencies outside of Ramsey County. Requests have been received from:

2022:

- Stillwater Library, Stillwater, MN.
- Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey, PA.
- Arapahoe Libraries, Englewood, CO.
- YouthLink, Minneapolis, MN.

2021:

- Crookston Library, Moorhead, MN.
- Dakota County, MN.
- Clayton Children's Museum, Santa Monica, CA.
- Explora Science Center and Children's Museum, Albuquerque, NM.
- Children's Museum, Richmond, VA.

2020:

- Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs national conference,

2019:

- Minneapolis Veteran's Affairs Health Care Systems, Minneapolis, MN.
- MN Association of Law Libraries.
- University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, MN.

To expand the work of Authentic Connections, Public Health seeks to adjust Authentic Connection program by offering the training to agencies and organizations beyond the county and charge a fee for the service. Additionally, Public Health seeks to revise the current fee of \$73 per service to an hourly rate of \$75 for staff time, plus travel costs and expenses related to the delivery of presentations via virtual platforms/webinars and/or in person. The Authentic Connections training program would result in service revenue agreements with the agencies and organizations that receive the service.

The revision to the fee structure will allow the county to recover the costs of conducting Authentic Connections programming and would remain in the fee schedule each year. Sharing Authentic Connections with other entities enables Public Health to strengthen programming, enhance the county's reputation as a leader in violence prevention and fulfill Public Health's core values of innovation, leadership, partnership and prevention.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Approve adjustments to Public Health Authentic Connections program fee from \$73 per service to \$75 per hour, plus travel expenses and additional program costs.
2. Authorize the County Manager to approve and execute service revenue agreements and amendments for the Authentic Connections program, in a form approved by the County Attorney's Office.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Reinhardt, seconded by Commissioner Carter. Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

Absent: - 1: McDonough

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board