

Boston City Council
Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget
Boston Centers for Youth and Families
Working Session: Tuesday, April 28, 2020, 11:00 a.m.
Hearing: Thursday, May 7, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY21 budgets for the Boston Centers for Youth and Families at the Working Session on Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

Recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT8G6cS3-pg&t=1s>

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 7th, at 2PM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 7th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
3. By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 7th, indicating how each question will be answered.

Boston Centers for Youth & Families Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- I'm encouraged by the additional monies the Administration put in the budget for violence disruption, but a lot of these programs are impacted by the COVID-19 situation – the in-person work they focus on may not be possible, yet the need is still there. How will we repurpose these funds to address the violence we're already seeing in our neighborhoods?

BCYF allocation of funds for violence prevention/intervention for FY21 is focused on a new program, SOAR Boston (Street Outreach, Advocacy and Response). It's part of an overall violence prevention strategy developed in collaboration and led through the HHS cabinet under Chief Marty Martinez. In addition to targeted outreach to the most active gangs in the City, SOAR Boston (formerly known as the Streetworker Program) has redesigned its model to include a service delivery component that will offer core and workplace-readiness life skills to gang-involved youth and young adults to change their life-course trajectory and improve their social and economic success. SOAR

Boston is in the process of developing virtual training for youth and young adults if the COB's COVID-19 restrictions are not lifted by the summer.

Since the start of COB COVID-19 response, SOAR Boston has executed a modified outreach plan that is both virtual and observational in its approach. SOAR Boston has continued to canvass the City's most vulnerable neighborhoods for gang-related acts of violence. In the event of a gang-related shooting, SOAR Boston's Strategy and Operations Manager (SOM) has deployed Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (OECs) to the scene, to gauge tempers and evaluate whether a plan for removing or containing the youth and young adults involved is necessary.

The OECs have stayed in constant contact with their clients via telephone, text messaging, video conferencing and social media. They will continue to do so until we are given additional direction from public health officials and the COB on changes to social distancing protocols.

- How are we rethinking our services for all the young people who use the BCYF centers – is there a modified way to use the centers this summer, and if not, what are we going to do?

We are currently exploring all our options for various reopening scenarios.

- Could it work to run more small group outdoor programming this summer?

We traditionally do not run many outdoor programs, that is something that Boston Parks & Recreation does in the summer, but we are exploring through our recovery planning process what possibilities we can offer. Such programming will have to be informed with public health officials and COB guidance and approval.

- We need to create virtual spaces of tactile engagement. Can we send out materials for arts and science activities to our families over the summer? How is BCYF thinking about engaging young people from home?

We are currently exploring all our options for various reopening scenarios.

- What capacity is there for BCYF to add a multipurpose community center – for seniors and youth alike – in the downtown neighborhoods as part of a large construction project, whether at the Hurley Building or the Hynes or the West End Library or the MGH expansion? What steps would it take to plan for such a thing?

On occasion, we have been approached to expand into these neighborhoods. At the moment, there are no immediate plans for a BCYF center downtown. We are currently

focused on upgrades to current facilities and feasibility studies for standalone facilities in Charlestown and Dorchester.

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- The Jackson Mann Community Center is set to close in July of 2021 and the Faneuil Library is slated to close for renovation in December of 2020. So, we are losing both at the same time.

- o Is there funding committed to identify and prepare swing space for this while the schools are undergoing reconstruction?

Prior to COVID-19 we were in conversations around the present situation with Jackson Mann School and Community Center with BPS, PFD, and BPDA that we will pick up as soon as we are able to focus on this again.

- o Are there plans to have an ongoing library in the community space when the library is closed?

This should be answered by the BPL.

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- What will happen to summer jobs, the youth organizations, and what will these programs look like during this pandemic?

- o How are we going to engage our youths in light of violence and the opioid epidemic?

BCYF will work with DYEE on hiring the same number of youth.

- o What is the summer job plan and what is BCYF's vision in this pandemic and how can the City Council and our local youth programming non-profit partners assist in this effort?

The Department of Youth Engagement & Employment operates the SuccessLink, summer jobs program however, our youth workers are planning on engaging in virtual settings around jobs skills, resume building, interview skills etc. BCYF may be calling on you all to get your assistance in networking with the business community to help expose our youth to the professional world.

Councilor Frank Baker asked:

- Does BCYF have any plans for a stand-alone mixed-use community center for seniors, teens, and toddlers for the Neponset area of Dorchester?

BCYF Leahy Holloran currently serves the Neponset area of Dorchester and beyond and presently provides a spectrum of programs that accommodate all ranges and demographics in the area. We were approved for a Feasibility Study for a stand alone community center in the Neponset Area of Dorchester and hopefully can begin the process in the upcoming months.

Councilor Kim Janey, President asked:

- What is the funding for programming and for BCYF language coordinators?
 - Where will they be located?

We are not getting any Language Access coordinators. BCYF works with the Language and Communications Access Office like all departments do to make our information accessible to all. Any funds we receive from LCA (generally a few thousand dollars) goes to translation services.

Councilor Essaibi-George asked:

- In this COVID response the more we can use our BCYF centers, the more resources we can get to our residents and families across the City – they’ve been used for food distribution, but it would be great if we could do more from these community hubs.

Several sites have been in touch with their constituents/youth virtually in an effort to stay in touch conducting story times, holding conversations and providing learning packages to continue the learning process and combat feelings of isolation. We will be building on this in the coming months to offer even more.

- What is BCYF planning, moving forward in this COVID-19 era, to reincorporate our families into activities like swimming, physical activities, cooking classes and summer camp?

We are exploring options for aquatics and camp opportunities based on capacity, ratios and guidance/requirements from city and state and city licensing agencies, i.e. DEEC and ISD. This will help us make safe and intentional decisions to that end. Per the CDC, pools are safe to swim in. The

chlorine does kill the Covid-19 virus. Social distancing is the challenge. We would have to devise a plan for social distancing. Small group swims or group swimming lessons would be one way to limit the pool capacity and lap swimming would be an easy way to have social distancing, utilizing every other lane.

- Update on the street outreach program (SOAR)?

Streetworkers SOAR program model shifted to a virtual model of communicating with clients in their caseload and shifted outreach to be an observational outreach model requiring staff to engage with men and women in their caseload that they come across in their deployment. The program has continued to provide on the scene support and assessment at recent youth homicide and shooting incidents; engaging impacted youth families. We will continue with this model until public health/City officials modify social distancing policies.

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- **What are BCYF's plans for their sports and fitness program considering COVID-19?**

- How are programs going to be adapted in the event of social distancing?

We are working through a plan at the moment on what kinds of recreational sports programs we may be able to run and will be working closely with public health officials to identify which sports health & wellness initiatives we can run that still safeguard everyone who participates. We are exploring virtual and technology based programs that keeps BCYF connected to constituents and provide support and services.

- **Are women and minority business owners included in BCYF contracts?**

BCYF awards its contracts according to the guidelines laid out by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' General Laws as it relates to the Public Procurement Statutes. Additionally, BCYF uses contractors and vendors from the City of Boston's database of available Minority and Women owned businesses that have been vetted and are ready to perform services for the various departments in the City of Boston.

- **Did COVID-19 have any impact on BCYF's City Hall Child Care Revolving Fund?**

City Hall Child Care has been closed following the recommendations of Governor Baker and the CDC. This closure has negatively affected the department's revenue in that regard.

- **Can you provide an update on projects at the Hyde Park & Mattahunt Community Centers?**

BCYF Hyde Park: we are still awaiting PFD-Capital update on construction work start dates. In the meantime we have updated with ISD Building Inspectors and should get updated Certificate of Occupancy for the space shortly as the rest of the facility is in good shape.

BCYF Mattahunt: Construction Phase was expected to start Summer 2020 with the community center and athletic building closed for 9-12 months. We hope that schedule can be maintained.

Councilor Ed Flynn asked

- I would like to see expansion of services and programming at the Tynan and the Condon Schools in South Boston.

The Tynan, Condon, and Curley have worked together to help expand programming since the Tynan and Condon have limited space. Fishing and utilizing the Curley beach are one example and the Youth Workers in all three sites have been working on more expansion within the neighborhood. We expanded our services and programming at the Condon Community Center by opening on Saturdays which increased senior, swim lessons, teen and youth recreational and educational activities for the community.

- Update on the Curley Community Center.

The BCYF Curley Capital Project has continued to hold virtual design phase meetings since the pandemic has begun, with this phase ongoing and moving along throughout this time. We have had submissions by the Architects and recently received PFD-Capital responses with BCYF inputs included to them. At this time we are working on the same timelines to get the Curley Capital Project Design Phase completed, later this year, and only after at least another community meeting which may also be held virtually soon. We did hold two community meetings before things shut down.

- Blackstone Community Center needs structural work, would like to see more investment in that area.

As the BCYF Blackstone Community Center is located in a Boston Public School Building, the school department is responsible for structural work on the building.

- Interested in knowing about the different programs available through BCYF and where it can be expanded.
 - Would to see a City program for swimming lessons and water safety, and lessons for children of color, Asian children, and Latino children. ***Each spring BCYF offers Swim for Safety, free beginner swim lessons for Boston youth ages 4-12 at BCYF pools over April school vacation week. BCYF Swim for Safety helps participants become safe and confident around water and eager to continue to participate in aquatics programs.***
 - Provide opportunities for children to visit the Harbor Island for educational purposes. ***BCYF works each summer with Save the Harbor Save the Bay to provide opportunities for our summer program participants to visit the Harbor Islands. Hundreds of BCYF youth are exposed to the islands thanks to this partnership.***
 - What are the swimming pool hours at the Blackstone Community Center? ***Tuesday - Friday, 3pm - 9pm; Saturday 9am - 4pm; specific schedule varies by season (i.e. open swim, lap swim, etc).***
- There are several BCYF centers located in BHA developments.
 - What interactions is BCYF having with BHA to improve services and to ensure that BHA youths are aware of these services?
Currently, residents that live in Bromley Heath, Gallivan, Charlestown. Condon, Alice Taylor, Villa Victoria, Cathedral, South Street, Maverick Landing, Orient Heights, South Street, Archdale BHA sites participate in programming that includes athletics, childcare, youth development programming, computer based activities and aquatics at BCYF sites across the city. BCYF partners with BHA and other affordable housing partners to offer a well rounded spectrum of programming.
 - How can we ensure that BHA youths are afforded the same programs and opportunities, especially access to healthy foods?
They presently are afforded these services.

- o What can we do to make sure these programs continue?

Continue to support BCYF operations and programming expansion goals

Councilor Lydia Edwards asked:

- Update on Nazzaro Community Center in the North End - not in the construction of the new center, but in the condition of the building today.

We continue to do internal and external repairs to BCYF Nazzaro as needed and used this current downtime to complete several smaller site projects such as painting of several areas and other upgrades.

- Interested in BCYF external funding sources in terms of transparency, accountability and equity of funding allocations. The City does not have access to this information.

- Can you provide updates on the following projects:

- o BCYF Paris Street Pool – is this still starting as planned?

Design phase and bid process is complete. Construction phase is expected to start shortly as soon as construction projects are approved to begin citywide by the Mayor.

- o Senior Center in East Boston – is this still starting as planned?

The senior center is not a BCYF project.

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- Any plans for a stand-alone senior center in West Roxbury, as we have the highest percentage of seniors in my district?

Both the BCYF Roche Community Center and BCYF Ohrenberger Community Center already conduct strong, successful senior programming in West Roxbury. The Roche is a stand alone site and Ohrenberger is a school site that successfully shares space with BPS. Although not dedicated senior centers, the success of both programs speaks to this need being met very well. Activities such as crafts, trips, yoga, pickleball, balance workshops, recreational activities i.e. mahjong, bridge and regular luncheons occur

and partnerships with Ethos are strong as well. All activities are well attended. There are no plans for any additional BCYF buildings for seniors at this time.

- Any opportunities in the Facilities plan as it relates to school buildings to share a space with a community center? BCYF Ohrenberger CC's partnership with BPS is longstanding and successful.

- Is there an opportunity for the Hennigan Center and how do we address the dilapidated condition of the building? How do we address that in the short term and also incorporate it into the BuildBPS plan as well?

As the BCYF Hennigan Community Center is located in a Boston Public School Building, the school department is responsible for structural work on the building. We will continue to work closely with BPS to address and resolve issues. Previous to COVID-19 outbreak, several meetings were in place that had to be postponed. We are hopeful that we can continue this joint effort to address the existing issues as we move out of the pandemic. But, even from the brief meetings a strategy was developed and some items in the pool were address.

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- What is BCYF marketing communication goals?

From the Initiatives document prepared for the hearing: We will implement a new data system that meets our data and operational needs, provides constituents and members with better service, integrates more seamlessly with other BCYF and City of Boston systems, and will be able to grow and change as we do. We will work with the City of Boston Language Access Coordinator to expand translation and interpretation within BCYF. We will continue to increase the marketing capacity of BCYF staff, building from virtual training to in-person training when possible. Social media campaign aimed at sharing all BCYF has to offer planned for summer/fall 2020.

- Will it work with the City of Boston language access to expand language interpretation within the centers and how will it be implemented?

The BCYF Marketing and Communications team has been working with the LCA office for 2 years to increase availability of translated materials, analyse the needs of the centers (languages, staffing abilities, and technology), and plan how to best roll out on demand interpretation to centers.

- Is BCYF considering using social media campaign to highlight and share all of its offerings for the summer and fall 2020?

Yes. We referenced that in our initiatives in the budget docs.

- How is BCYF going to adapt during COVID-19?

We are currently working through that process exploring all options.