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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statewide Afterschool Network receives \$94 million grant from U.S. Department of Education for Full-Service Community Schools

Tens of thousands of students and their family members in communities in need around the state of Illinois will soon have access to critical services thanks to new federal grant funding. On November 28, 2023, the Afterschool for Children and Teens Now Coalition (ACT Now) was awarded two Full-Service Community School Grants from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). This a five-year grant with an annual award for each grant of up to \$9,420,400. This will total \$94,204,000 for Illinois schools over five years.

ACT Now is an Illinois organization that supports afterschool programs and community schools statewide through professional development, capacity building, and policy and advocacy. ACT Now is also part of the nationwide system of statewide afterschool networks with a counterpart in all 50 states. ACT Now is fiscally-sponsored by Metropolitan Family Services (MFS), a non-profit agency with a history of success in providing critical services to communities across Chicagoland.

The Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Grant Program provides support for the planning, implementation, and operation of full-service community schools that improve the coordination, integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families, particularly for children attending high-poverty schools, including high-poverty rural schools. Full-service community schools meet the unique needs of the neighborhoods they serve by leveraging local nonprofit, private sector, and public partnerships to bring wraparound services into school buildings, such as mental health supports, dental services, and assistance with shelter and nutrition. They operate with the assistance of school staff who coordinate with school administrators, stakeholders, and local organizations to deliver these services and more to students, their families, and members of the community. Research has shown that comprehensive community school interventions have increased student attendance, on-time grade progression, and high school graduation rates.

ACT Now received two FSCS grants, one to support Title I schools throughout the state and another to support rural schools. ACT Now plans to partner with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and sixteen districts throughout Illinois to implement the community schools model. More information about how school districts and community-based organizations can be involved in this effort will be forthcoming.

Illinois has a rich history of school community partnerships dating back to the settlement houses of the late 19th Century. Chicago has one of the largest districtwide community school systems in the country, the Community Schools Initiative (CSI), which funds almost 200 community schools. Chicago Public

Schools and Chicago Teachers Union also partnered to create the Sustainable Community Schools (SCS), which funds 20 more schools in Chicago. Outside of Chicago, there are ten other communities in Illinois implementing the community schools model in their districts. ACT Now began to support the expansion of community schools in Illinois five years ago through advocacy initiatives, professional development, and technical assistance. ACT Now is incredibly excited to help make Illinois a nationwide example of the power of community schools to transform schools and communities throughout the state.

“We are pleased to be able to continue to support the strong tradition of community schools in Chicago, the Chicago suburbs, and Downstate, as well as expand the holistic framework to new areas of the state. We look forward to developing our partnerships with communities across Illinois and providing necessary services to more youth and families leveraging the community schools strategy,” said Susan Stanton, Network Lead.

USDOE Press Release: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-74-million-expand-full-service-community-schools>

Awards Page with Proposal Abstracts: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/full-service-community-schools-program-fscs/awards/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=