

American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendation Cover Sheet

Please submit this document with any recommendations for funding from Rhode Island’s allocation of federal fiscal recovery funds available through the American Rescue Plan Act. This information will be made available to the public along with any detailed documents submitted that describe the proposal. It is encouraged that such documents identify clear goals and objectives and quantifiable metrics.

This is not a formal request for funds, and submission of recommendations does not guarantee a response, public hearing, or appropriation from the General Assembly.

Name of Lead Agency: Community Blessings / Trinity Village

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): _____

Contact Person / Title: James McKenna, Executive Director Phone: 888-344-4045

Address: 58 East Main Road Middletown, RI 02842

Email Address (if available) _____

Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

Funds needed to create recovery housing and outpatient services for those seeking treatment for substance abuse disorders.

Total request: \$ \$25,000,000

One-time or Recurring Expense? investments made overtime as locations become available

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) – See link for further information

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/arpa/commdocs/Treasury%20-%20Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

- Respond to the public health emergency and its economic impacts xx
- Premium pay to eligible workers _____
- Government services/state revenue replacement _____
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure _____



November 11, 2021

Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker
Honorable Dominick J. Ruggerio, President RI General Assembl
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggerio,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations for the expenditure of the American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

We respectfully request that the American Rescue Plan funds be used to treat the increasing impact of substance abuse problems in Rhode Island. In particular, we ask that \$25,000,000 in funding from the Rescue Plan be invested in increasing the amount of available recovery housing and outpatient services for those in need of recovery services. These funds would be used to renovate existing properties to create much-needed recovery housing for families and community support services. The spaces would combine housing with outpatient care services utilizing a healthy living and wellness approach to treat substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders and impact intergenerational change.

One facility to be considered is the former convent owned by St. Lucy Parish, Middletown, which has planning underway to create a twelve (12) bed residential facility with a behavioral health clinic for community supports that include education and work-friendly opportunities. The facility will provide housing for over fifty (50) women and their children annually. The outpatient clinic will offer treatment services to two hundred fifty (250) people per year.

Rhode Island Faces a Substance Use/Abuse Crisis

Rhode Island may be a small state, but it has a substantial substance abuse problem. Out of fifty states and the District of Columbia, Rhode Island ranks 25th for at-risk states for drug use and 7th for those in need of assistance for drug health issues and rehab but cannot access services. (Source: <https://wallethub.com/edu/drug-use-by-state/35150>)

Rhode Island residents (12+) have excessive rates of illicit drug use other than marijuana, with some of the highest rates in the northeast for 12-17 and 26+-year-olds. Rhode Islanders also have concerning rates of needing but not receiving treatment for their drug use, with the highest prevalence in the northeast for 12-17-year-olds in 2016-2017 (3.64%). (source: Behavioral Health in Rhode Island (2019): State Epidemiological Profile.)

The Need for Housing Combined with Treatment is Great

Rhode Island is home to approximately 800,000 adults. According to the American Addiction Center, 1 out of 8 adults simultaneously struggles with alcohol and drug use disorders (SUD), translating to 100,000 Rhode Island adults who need access to treatment. Yet, Community Blessings, in partnership with Trinity Village, is the only organization in Rhode Island that provides recovery housing for women, men, and their children to build the framework for a sustainable recovery in a supervised, clean, and healthy living structured environment. Their facility in Middletown provides enough housing to serve only twenty (20) families per year.

COVID-19 is Making the Crisis Worse

The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this crisis as it is predicted that Rhode Island will see a 21% increase in overdose deaths from 2020 to 2021. (source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdosedata.htm>) Unfortunately, individuals with substance use disorders are also at an increased risk for poor COVID-19 outcomes. The stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic have led to an increase in the consumption of alcohol (10–18% of adults), cannabis (6–8%), and other drugs (3%) (Ipsos, 2020a, Ipsos, 2020b, Ipsos, 2020c, Morning Consult, 2020, Nanos, 2020, Rotermann, 2020). Increases in substance use are correlated with anxiety or distress about COVID-19, and substance use is a commonly reported way of coping with COVID-19-related worries. (Rehm et al., 2020, Rodriguez et al., 2020). (Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460320308832>)

The Whole Family Suffers – Especially Children

Substance abuse impacts the individual and can have devastating effects on the entire family – spouses, children, and parents. The stress, conflicts, lack of trust, neglect, and financial impacts of addiction can be devastating to families. “Children who grow up seeing a parent addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to develop substance use disorder in their adulthood. They are also three times more likely to be neglected or physically and/or sexually abused. Seeing a parent on drugs often invokes distressing emotions which not only create delays in learning and development but can also lead to prolonged mental and emotional disorders.”

(Source: <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/how-addictionaffects-the-family/>)

Community Blessings – A Model for Intergenerational Change

Community Blessings takes a whole person and family-centered approach to treating substance abuse disorders and is based on three pillars to building a solid foundation for a successful recovery:

1. **Housing/Environment.** Living quarters allow parents and children to stay together. We believe that children should not be further traumatized by being removed from their parents, especially as children will also need support services to break the cycle of addiction. Our structured living program was created to help families form healthy boundaries and relationships. During the day, families learn more about addiction and how to create a new life in recovery for everyone.
2. **Emotional and Mental Health.** We have established outpatient addiction rehabilitation clinics that provide comprehensive individualized treatment plans to accommodate work and family schedules that guide patients through a process of recovery, self-care, and discovery. We create personalized, evidence-based treatment plans for the patient’s needs and strengths. We look at the whole person for optimal health and wellness in their physical, emotional, and mental

health and soulful way of living with self-discovery as a critical factor to a patient's healing and growth in recovery throughout their continuum of care.

3. **Employment.** Our approach is to work with men and women and their support networks to create an environment that makes enhanced recovery possible. This approach involves education, employment, hands-on services, peer support groups, community resources, and having the opportunity to create a life and reputation that matches their values and includes their loved ones. Becoming self-aware and breaking cycles are intimidating and uncomfortable processes. Our environment supports healthy decision-making and creates a space to invent their path forward.

Creating Housing by Converting Existing Buildings

Community Blessings seeks to increase the availability of housing for families struggling with substance abuse. Our vision is to build sustainable recovery communities that provide healthy living environments for individuals and their families to reside, access support services, receive employment opportunities through community partners. We want to help adults develop the skills that will allow them to thrive and serve as a model for the next generation.

We believe that the quickest way to create much-needed housing is to remodel existing buildings to create space for housing and outpatient services. An investment of \$25,000,000 toward this effort would reduce the housing crisis and the costs for inpatient level of care. We believe this recovery approach will also lower the recidivism rate and provide better outcomes for those seeking treatment.

We appreciate your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James McKenna". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

James McKenna
Executive Director, Community Blessings Foundation