

Early-Phase Competition Absolute Priority 4 (SEL)

Seneca Family of Agencies

S411C230088

Compass Care: A family-focused, peer support model for increasing student engagement and achievement

Applicant Name: Seneca Family of Agencies

Project Title: Compass Care: A family-focused, peer support model for increasing student engagement and achievement

Type of Grant Requested: (select one) Early-Phase Mid-Phase Expansion

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

Absolute Priority 1-- Demonstrate a Rationale (Early), Moderate (Mid), Strong (Expansion)

Absolute Priority 2-- Field-Initiated Innovations—General

Absolute Priority 3-- Promoting STEM Education

Absolute Priority 4-- Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs

Absolute Priority 5-- Educator Recruitment and Retention

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

Competitive Preference Priority 1— Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners

Competitive Preference Priority 2—Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning* (FOR EARLY-PHASE AP5 APPLICANTS ONLY)

Total number of students to be served by the project: 672 students

Grade level(s) to be served by the project: 5th–12th grade

Definition of high-need students: Students who are chronically absent (defined as missing 10% or more of school days), which includes students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities who are at a greater risk of chronic absenteeism.

Brief description of project activities: The grant and matching funds will support three years of Compass Care implementation with a dedicated, full-time Family Partner (FP) at seven schools. Over an intensive 10-week intervention cycle, the FP leads a team of service providers and natural supports to provide engagement, comprehensive case management, and care coordination services to support families of chronically absent students to understand and address barriers to their child's success in school. The project will include oversight by an Advisory Council comprised of education and mental health leaders, input from a Youth Advisory Board consisting of youth who have participated in the Compass Care program and youth from University of California, Berkeley's Hope Scholars program, and an independent evaluation conducted by WestEd.

Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes: The goals of the Compass Care project are that students will improve their attendance, self-management, school connectedness, and academic engagement, and families will be empowered to connect with resources and supports to sustain student engagement and achievement. The recurring 10-week Compass Care intervention cycle is broken down into four stages, each with its own distinct objectives and outcomes. Progress towards these objectives and the two overarching program goals will be assessed as part of a rigorous quasi-experimental design (QED) examining the impact of Compass

Care on absenteeism, GPA, credit accumulation, self-management, and school connectedness.

Summary of how the project is innovative: The Compass Care model is an innovative new strategy for chronic absenteeism that (1) utilizes dedicated staff whose sole responsibility is to provide interventions that combat chronic absenteeism, supporting schools to address absenteeism without burdening already stressed systems; (2) emphasizes flexibility and intensive interventions using a 10-week intervention cycle that allows for immediate, direct support targeting chronic absenteeism; (3) utilizes a peer provider

model with Family Partners who have relevant lived experience and are uniquely positioned to establish rapport and provide information and support in a manner that families find relevant; and (4) incorporates evidence-based teaming practices that leverages natural supports to sustain progress.

Other studies related to the proposed project: The project is informed by existing research on chronic absenteeism (e.g., Fornander & Kearney, 2019; Kearney, 2016; Malika, et al., 2021) and evidence-based and promising practices related to dropout prevention (Check & Connect), whole-school intervention models (MTSS), and comprehensive mental health treatment (multisystemic therapy). The project also builds on research regarding the efficacy of peer partners and natural supports to increase engagement and sustain progress. (e.g., Cutrona, et al., 2000; Radigan, et al., 2014; Walker & Aue, 2006; Walsh, 2002).

Proposed implementation sites: Seven public charter middle and high schools serving underrepresented students within Valor Collegiate Academies (Nashville, Tennessee), Highline Public Schools (King County, Washington), and Alliance College-Ready Public Schools California (Los Angeles, California)

Organizations partnering with this project: University of California Berkeley: Hope Scholars Program, WestEd, Valor Collegiate Academies (Nashville, Tennessee), Highline Public Schools (King County,