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## **Statewide Counseling Initiative to Help Indiana Schools Strengthen Student Pathways to Success**

### **Grant Opportunity to Help Indiana K-12 Counseling**

INDIANAPOLIS – Lilly Endowment Inc. is launching the Comprehensive Counseling Initiative for Indiana K-12 Students, a five-year effort that includes encouraging public school corporations and charter schools to explore how they help students from elementary grades through high school prepare for academic, career and personal success.

Through a [request for proposals](#) issued today, the Endowment invites public school corporations and charter schools to submit proposals for support to help them learn more about the best practices for comprehensive counseling programs in Indiana and from around the country, evaluate their current counseling programs, and develop and implement plans to enhance the quality and expand the scale of their counseling programs. The Endowment contemplates allocating up to \$30 million for this initiative depending on the number, size and quality of the proposals submitted, among other factors. Through the initiative, the Endowment will provide non-competitive planning grants and competitive implementation grants. The size of each grant will be based on student enrollment. Planning grants will range from \$30,000 to \$50,000. For implementation grants, which can be used during a four-year grant period, applicants may request up to \$100 per student enrolled, and the amounts may range from \$100,000 to \$3 million.

“The Endowment’s aim is to help school corporations and charter schools eventually implement comprehensive approaches to school counseling that address the academic, college, career, and social and emotional needs of K-12 students,” said Sara B. Cobb, the Endowment’s vice president for education.

“We want to see a significant increase in the number of K-12 students in Indiana who are emotionally healthy and who realize academic success and graduate from high school,” Cobb said. “We also want them to achieve the valuable postsecondary credentials, certificates and degrees that are essential for meaningful employment so they can compete and prosper in the global society in which they will live and work.”

Across Indiana, too few schools use a best practices comprehensive counseling model to prepare their students for successful lives beyond high school, according to research conducted by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis.

Among the findings: school counselors are often burdened with large caseloads, which limits their ability to help students. According to the National Association of College Admission Counseling, Indiana ranks 45<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the number of K-12 students per counselor with an average of one counselor for every 620 students. This fact and others led the Indiana Bicentennial Commission to include strengthening school counseling as one of its “big ideas” for Indiana’s future.

The Indiana Chamber’s research moreover found that Indiana school counselors often are assigned non-counseling responsibilities - such as administering state tests or Advanced Placement exams - that further limit their availability to provide academic, social and emotional, and college and career counseling.

In addition, students in Indiana struggle with mental health issues at a higher rate than their peers in most other states, which jeopardizes their ability to learn and thrive. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *2016 Kids Count Profile*, Indiana ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the overall well-being of children and youth. And in its *2014 Issue Brief*, the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) reported that in a national survey of 43 states, Indiana ranked first in the percentage of high school students who had considered attempting suicide and second in the percentage of high school students who attempted to take their own lives.

Indiana’s current school counseling challenges are part of a larger landscape of lagging educational attainment and economic prosperity. Too many Indiana students face limited earning potential and weak prospects for satisfying careers, which jeopardizes long-term quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities.

According to U.S. Census data, in 2014 Indiana ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in the percentage of adults, age 25 to 64, with at least a bachelor’s degree. And according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2015 Indiana ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the nation in per capita income, having slipped from 29<sup>th</sup> in the nation since 1995.

The Endowment is pleased that there are promising approaches to counseling in Indiana. For example, some school corporations and charter schools are adopting aspects of best practice comprehensive counseling models, such as using on-line counseling and advising tools, integrating counselors into school leadership teams, reducing counselors’ non-counseling duties and engaging local businesses and community organizations to

augment school counseling programs. The Endowment, however, believes more of such approaches are needed.

“Enhancing and expanding in a comprehensive way the academic, postsecondary, career, and social and emotional counseling in Indiana’s schools could help reverse Indiana’s negative trends,” Cobb said. “Addressing these challenges is critical to the future quality of life for Indiana residents.”

The Indiana Chamber, IYI and CELL, which have conducted research about counseling best practices, counseling challenges in Indiana schools and the welfare of Indiana children and have other types of expertise relevant to the initiative, will be available to help public school corporations and charter schools consider whether to apply for grants under the initiative and to help applicants prepare their proposals. The Endowment has provided funding to these organizations to enable them to provide this technical assistance through orientation conferences the Endowment will convene and webinars and other on-line forums.

#### **About Lilly Endowment Inc.**

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly and his two sons, Eli and J.K. Jr., with gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical company. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.