**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

MEDIA CONTACT:

Adrienne Cooley

517-719-6321

[adrienne@gethappypr.com](mailto:adrienne@gethappypr.com)

West Michigan Partnership for Children Awarded Millage Funds

*WMPC to use “Ready by Five” Early Childhood Millage funds to implement Parent Engagement Program*

**GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.** (December 29, 2020) – [West Michigan Partnership for Children](https://www.wmpc.care/) (WMPC) is pleased to announce its acceptance of the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds. The funds will be used to introduce a new trauma-informed Parent Engagement Program and six new job roles, which WMPC seeks to fill in January 2021. The program will engage and equip parents with children ages 0-5 entering the foster care system by:

* Building relationships
* Providing emotional support, mentoring and modeling
* Encouraging case plan responsibilities
* Supporting parents in court and family team meetings

“Through this new program, parents will receive increased peer-to-peer mentorship and encouragement from individuals who have been in their shoes, supporting timely reunifications and preventing re-entry to foster care,” said Kylene Dalton-Koons, Director of Care Coordination at WMPC. “WMPC is proud to be part of the Ready by Five Provider Network. Family engagement, peer support and mentoring are proven strategies to promote safety and permanency of children and families in the child welfare system.”

To operate this program, WMPC will hire one full-time Parent Engagement Coordinator and five part-time Parent Engagement Specialists. These roles will rely on the knowledge of lived experience within the child welfare system and work closely with families at the five private partner agencies in Kent County *(Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Charities West Michigan, D.A. Blodgett-St. John’s, Samaritas and Wellspring Lutheran Services).*

The Parent Engagement Program was made possible because of the generosity of Kent County taxpayers and the voter-approved Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage. The millage funds allow WMPC to provide services for two years and will be distributed and overseen by First Steps Kent.

“First Steps Kent is proud to support [WMPC’s] mission and we look forward to partnering with [WMPC] as we work to improve the lives of Kent County’s youngest children and their families,” said Annemarie Valdez, President of First Steps Kent.

WMPC has been piloting a community-based foster care model for three years through a contract with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and is currently the first and only performance-based child welfare model in Michigan.

Interested applicants can find more information at [WMPC’s website](https://www.wmpc.care/).