



I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

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Date

Contact Information

Organization Name: KenCrest Services

ED/CEO Name: Aurora Kripa

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Board Chair Name: Frank Guthridge

Website: www.kencrest.org

Board Chair Approval (check here):

Year Incorporated: 1907

Primary Contact Name: Kris Chiu

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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

	Arts, Culture, Heritage		Education, Library		Environment, Animals
x	Health	x	Human Services		Social Justice, Civic Engagement
	Religion	x	If other, please describe: Early Childhood Education		

Mission:

KenCrest's mission is to support community development by **Exploring Possibilities, Mobilizing Resources, and Empowering Dreams**, enabling individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to build meaningful lives, live independently in the community regardless of age, ability, or environment, and advance inclusion.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

KenCrest's program and services serve individuals with I/DD residing in *Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery, and Philadelphia* in Pennsylvania, *Kent, New Castle, and Sussex* in Delaware, and *Fairfield and New Haven* in Connecticut.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served. (Include Chester County # &/or % served.)

KenCrest supports nearly 5,000 individuals with I/DD annually across our 11 programs, from infancy through older adulthood. Nearly 60% are under 10, and the rest are between 10 and 89 years old. Some individuals live in our community homes located across 7 counties in PA, Delaware, and Connecticut, while others live with families, in LifeSharing homes, or independently with supportive services. Most rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid waivers to access essential support and services.

Approximately 400 individuals in our programs live in Chester County. Of these participants, 26% are children; more than 46% receive community living and clinical services; the rest participate in employment, community, and Enabling Technology smart home programs.

Our Early Intervention Program served nearly 2,500 children in PA, who were all identified with disabilities, developmental delays, or behavioral concerns related to physical or developmental challenges. Among the 2,000 adults we serve, half experience mobility challenges, more than 16% have developmental delays, and 3% have diagnoses such as autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Many also live with additional health conditions or disabilities, including blindness, anxiety, or cerebral palsy. Support needs vary widely - some individuals require continuous care, while others live independently with minimal assistance. The Early Learning Centers serve nearly 800 children across seven campuses in Philadelphia, 15% of whom have identified disabilities. About 90% of enrolled families live in poverty, and more than 75% of children come from at-risk families.

Annual Budget \$149,242,720

91 % of budget for program expenses

9 % of budget for administrative expenses

0 % of budget for fundraising expenses

100% = total

1,447 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

10 # of Board Volunteers

9 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

21 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

- 1) William Penn Foundation
- 2) PNC Grow Up Great
- 3) Philadelphia Foundation
- 4) Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
- 5) Kids N Hope Foundation

This grant proposal is for: Direct Service Programs & General Operating

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$10,000

Proposal Summary: *(a few sentences, please)*

KenCrest's Early Learning Intervention - **SWIFT Support** is a behavioral intervention that prevents early childhood suspension and expulsion due to challenging behaviors among children aged 0 to 5 in the greater Philadelphia region. The program will build educators' capacity and provide direct support across 5 early childhood education providers to help 10 to 15 young children remain in care in Chester County and to promote inclusion and healthy development for all children.

II. GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information in 1-3 pages. Please be brief.

1. Nonprofit's overall aims, key initiatives, key achievements & distinctiveness

KenCrest, founded in 1905, is a human services and education nonprofit organization serving children and adults with I/DD in Connecticut, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Our community-based service model helps individuals overcome obstacles by creating a supportive environment that fosters growth, development, and independence. Collaborating with families and community partners, we ensure individuals receive the support they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Services address a wide range of needs, including:

- **Community Housing:** Enable adults with disabilities to live in community settings with varying levels of support, fostering independence and well-being through our 140 group homes, LifeSharing, and Supported Independent Living Programs
- **Community Support and Enabling Technology:** Connect individuals with services and resources to support health, employment, and social participation to lead a meaningful life
- **Early Intervention:** Provide developmental services to children from birth to age five with developmental delays or disabilities and assist families in navigating and accessing the services.
- **Early Learning Centers:** offer high-quality education and development support for all children at our 7 ELCs in Philadelphia
- **Residential Services for Medically Fragile Children and Adults:** Provide specialized care and support for children with complex medical needs in 4 medical homes

Our commitment to people with I/DD drives innovative programs that help them live, work, connect, and thrive in inclusive communities. As a leading provider, we launched the nation's first inclusive preschools for children with and without disabilities in 1955, established the first community homes for adults with I/DD in Philadelphia and Delaware in the 1980s, and opened the nation's first transitional homes for medically fragile infants in 1988. In 2017, following the closing of state institutions, we opened the first community homes in southeastern PA for medically fragile adults. In 2020, we incorporated technologies into our services to enhance safety and greater independence at the homes of individuals with disabilities. We are the second organization in Pennsylvania to earn the Tech First Shift Accreditation. Our first Smart Home demonstration site opened in 2022 in Pottstown, and the second will open in Philadelphia in Spring 2026, showcasing our commitment to supporting individuals staying in their communities.

We also see the people we support as individuals first, their disabilities do not define them. Our person-centered approach across programs emphasizes individuals' involvement in making decisions about their care and daily lives. We facilitate their involvement in planning and setting goals with visual-based communication tools.

Through a comprehensive range of services, individuals at every stage of life and families across generations receive support. Providing full lifespan care within one organization builds long-term, trust-based relationships that cannot be found anywhere else. We are dedicated to helping people with disabilities move beyond traditional day programs and into inclusive community-based experiences that reflect their personal aspirations. Ensuring that every individual can lead a life with meaning and purpose is at the heart of our mission.

2. Funding request

- **What specific needs & issues are being addressed, via what programs and services?**

SWIFT Support Program (SWIFT) aims to reduce the number of young children suspended/expelled from childcare centers due to challenging behavior and to enhance the capacities of early childhood educators, promoting inclusion and healthy development for all children.

Across the country, young children are removed from early childhood education settings at alarming rates. Nearly 250 preschoolers are suspended or expelled from preschools each day, three times the rate of K-12 students^{1 2}, making early childhood settings one of the highest-risk environments for exclusionary discipline. These practices disproportionately affect African American children and children with developmental delays or disabilities. Although children with disabilities make up only 13% of the preschool population, they account for 75% of suspensions and expulsions, and more than half of all cases involve African American children (Novoa & Malik, 2017)³.

With only 43% of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in PA enrolled in high-quality, publicly funded pre-k, more than 87,000 children lack access to such a program. In Southeastern PA, this issue has impacted local families. A Philadelphia study found that 37% of early childhood programs had suspended or expelled at least one child under age five⁴.

From 2021–2024, our SWIFT received over 170 referrals from preschools and parents across Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties seeking support for children at risk of suspension or expulsion. In 2024-2025, Chester County alone had 54 children needing support⁵. Although the state launched Early Education Rapid Response in 2023, just six early childhood mental health consultants serve the entire Southeastern region, far from sufficient. Additionally, children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) are excluded from this service, further widening the gap in access to care. Coupled with persistent educator shortages, burnout, and rising operating costs (NAEYC, 2025), families face fewer high-quality options and an increased risk of suspension and expulsion for young children.

Early childcare experiences shape learning, social-emotional development, and long-term success. Removal before age five can have lasting, negative impacts on their confidence, attachment, and school readiness. It can also place enormous strain on families who might struggle to find alternative care options, often resulting in missed work, instability, or household stress.

SWIFT combines **teacher training and direct coaching** for early childhood educators, strengthening their abilities to address challenging behaviors among young children and enhancing overall quality of teaching and learning. Using an evidence-informed, relationship-based approach, the program builds educators' confidence and independence in preventing and managing challenging behaviors, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and sustaining inclusive classroom practices.

The year-long certification training consists of six self-paced modules and six live-facilitated webinars to equip early childhood professionals with knowledge and tools to develop strategies and work with children. Topics include an overview of SWIFT support, trauma-informed care, infant mental health and co-regulation, and positive behavioral strategies.

Participating educators will receive direct coaching support from our SWIFT Support Specialist, including:

- Observation and individualized support plan to ensure that children at risk of expulsion have tailored support
- One-on-one coaching for early childhood educators to strengthen skills, emotional regulation support, and classroom structure
- Collaborative partnerships with teachers and families to provide guidance, resources, and follow ups to sustain progress and reinforce positive behaviors to achieve developmental goals across environments

This blended support model contributes to both immediate and long-term goals of the SWIFT. Early childhood educators gain durable skills that reduce their reliance on crisis-based intervention, increase their capacity to support children with diverse developmental and behavioral needs, and promote continuity of care across classrooms and schools.

During the pilot period and recent implementation, SWIFT has built strong relationships with numerous childcare providers and community organizations. We also collaborate closely with the Chester County Department of Mental

Health/IDD. In addition, the Director of SWIFT Support Services is an active member of Chester County Early Childhood Collaborative Connection and its subcommittee on preschool suspension and expulsion, as well as other committees in Bucks and Delaware counties, helping to connect providers and families with SWIFT services.

- **Why is it important to fund this now?**

SWIFT first launched in 2021 with pilot funding for three years. It started in Philadelphia, then expanded to other counties in SE region in response to demands from early childhood providers, as no similar program existed in the area. The funding ended in 2024. Although our success led the State to provide a Rapid Response Grant to 18 organizations, 3 serving the SE region, supporting young children at risk of suspension and/or expulsion, the grant ended at the end of 2025.

In August 2025, the William Penn Foundation provided 3-year funding to SWIFT to continue our work and scale up training, increasing early childhood educators' capacity for long-term impact. However, it was limited to early childhood education providers in Philadelphia.

With funding limitations and uncertainty about the continuity of state funding, many young children, their families, and educators are left without resources for support. KenCrest is seeking funding from diverse sources to continue supporting the community and developing scalable training resources.

- **How will results & impact be demonstrated?**

Within 12 months, SWIFT will support 30 children/centers in Southeastern PA. It will ensure that young children have access to early childhood learning and increase teachers' competence in preparing every child for school, specific results, and impact for children and childcare centers in Chester County:

- Increase early childhood educators' capacities from 5 childcare centers
- Support 10-15 at-risk children remain in learning, reducing the number of children expelled from childcare centers due to disrupted, misunderstood, or needs-based behaviors
- Increase teacher confidence in working with children who have diverse developmental and behavioral needs
- Improve emotional regulation techniques and readiness among participating children
- Create a classroom culture of inclusion where educators feel supported, not overwhelmed

The team will track the following metrics to measure the impact toward goals and success:

- Number of referrals received by county
- Number of teachers trained by county
- Number of children supported by county
- Result of the supported children (remain in care, suspended/expelled, or withdrawn by parents)
- Changes in teachers' stress levels and job satisfaction

Over 80% of children supported through SWIFT remained in their early learning centers, and more than 90% of educators reported greater workplace satisfaction after participating in SWIFT. Our experience shows that when educators are equipped with the right knowledge and tools, authentic inclusion becomes possible, offering a proven alternative to exclusionary practices that disproportionately affect our youngest learners. With the support from the Foundation, we ensure that the benefits of SWIFT extend beyond individual classrooms, creating sustainable, center-wide improvements.

III. ATTACHMENTS

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors
3. Most recent annual report
4. Audited or reviewed recent financial statement
5. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
6. Current strategic plan.

¹ Center for American Progress, "[New Data Reveal 250 Preschoolers Are Suspended or Expelled Every Day](#)", Nov 6, 2017 - *Suspension and expulsion in preschool* (Novoa, C., & Malik, R. 2017).

² Early Care and Learning Council, "[Preschool Suspension & Expulsion](#)", Feb 28, 2023

³ Council on Children and Families, "[New York State Pyramid Model Leadership Team Brief](#)", July 2018 "

⁴ Becker, K. S. (2014). *Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood Settings in Philadelphia*. Public Citizens for Children and Youth.

⁵ Chester County Department of MH/IDD, Feb 2026