



GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MN LEGISLATURE AWARDS \$1.5 MILLION TO GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MN'S FATHER PROJECT TO SUPPORT MINNESOTA FAMILIES

ST. PAUL, MINN. – July 14, 2025 – The Minnesota Legislature awarded \$1.5 million to Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota's (GESMN) FATHER Project over the next two years as part of its final budget bill. This continues the funding the state granted to the program in 2023 that helped expand services to include the Twin Cities metro, St. Cloud/central Minnesota and Rochester/southeast Minnesota areas.

"Our FATHER Project legislation had strong bipartisan support in both the Minnesota House and Senate," said Andrew Freeberg, GESMN's director of family stability programs, referencing the bill's chief authors Sen. Bobby Joe Champion (59, DFL), Sen. Mark Koran (28, R), Rep. Max Rymer (28B, R) and Rep. Wayne Johnson (41A, R). "Leaders in Minnesota recognize the importance of dads being active in their children's lives."

"I've been blessed since 2017 to be a part of this bill," said Sen. Koran during the bill's senate hearing. "The FATHER Project supports men and their reintegration with their children and supports them in every facet of their role. They get mentorship and then become mentors themselves and leaders not only in the organization but in their families and communities."

"Kids raised in a household without a father are five-times more likely to experience poverty than children in two-parent households," added Sen. Champion. "FATHER Project is a national model here in Minnesota... this bill builds on this successful model. Kids benefit, families benefit, neighborhoods benefit, communities benefit, and by proxy the state benefits."

FATHER Project assists parents to overcome barriers that prevent them from supporting their children economically and emotionally by offering various services including job search support and career development, case management with a professional advocate, parent support groups, child support services, and family activities.



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“It really shaped the way I parent and it helped reframe the impact that my small actions have on my kids,” said Bo Njoroge, a former FATHER Project participant who is now the program's engagement coordinator in Rochester. “It takes just a handful of dads realizing the power of being available to one another. The exponential impact can reach multiple families, creating a lasting generational impact.”

Founded in 1999 by the City of Minneapolis, the FATHER (Fostering Actions To Help Earnings and Responsibility) Project became a program of Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota in 2004. Since then, the FATHER Project has served thousands of fathers through an extensive network of community partners with services in Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Cloud and Rochester. For every dollar invested in the program, it returns \$3.41 back to the community in increased wages, jobs and child support.

“FATHER Project is a key program within our set of GESMN Family Stability Programs,” explained Freeberg. “These funds will allow us to continue exploring innovation in implementing our holistic approach which ensures that dads are included as an essential part of a whole family service model. This approach benefits the children in the long-term.”

Learn more about FATHER Project at www.gesmn.org/father. Proceeds from Goodwill's thrift stores fund nearly 20 services that help over 5,500 Minnesotans each year to get equitable access to jobs and advance in the workforce.

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About Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota

Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides career training and support to eliminate barriers to work and independence. Every year we serve over 5,500 people, creating career possibilities together with customized services that include industry-specific training, family support, career navigation and strategies for long-term job retention. Proceeds from thrift retail reuse and recycling operations, e-commerce, grants and financial contributions fund nearly 20 services that help Minnesotans get equitable access to jobs and advance in the workforce. Shopping and donating items to your neighborhood Goodwill helps divert over 65 million pounds from Minnesota's landfills annually and has helped us people connect to jobs since 1919. Visit www.gesmn.org or follow @goodwillmn.