

The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the
State of Michigan and the
Council of Michigan Foundations

Connecting Government and Philanthropy to Improve the Health of Michigan's Families

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works in three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. Within health, OFL has made great strides in connecting government and philanthropy to expand access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food, especially for Michigan's most vulnerable populations.

Mitigating the Effects of Future Lead Exposure through School Breakfast

While lead was officially discovered in Flint's drinking water in September 2015, Flint's children and families had been drinking lead-poisoned water since April 2014. Although the damage was done, a solid nutrition foundation could still be created that could help mitigate the effects of future lead exposure and give Flint's children the best chance for a healthy future.

Prior to the Flint Water Crisis, OFL participated in conversations with Flint Community Schools around creating a district-wide alternative breakfast program. With the onset of the Water Crisis, a new approach to Flint's school breakfast program became a necessity to limit the effects of future lead exposure and to increase the capacity of Michigan's children to be engaged students despite their exposure to lead.

To help bring the alternative breakfast program to fruition, OFL connected government and philanthropic partners, including

Michigan No Kid Hungry, the United Way of Genesee County, Flint Community Schools, the Kellogg Corporation, Fair Food Network, the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, and the District's food service company, SoedexoMAGIC. Through these partnerships, OFL linked the Flint Community Schools to the funding and technical assistance it needed to carry out its unique and ambitious district-wide breakfast program plan.

Flint Community Schools tailored alternative breakfast programs to each school in the district, including: Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab and Go, and Second Chance Breakfast to cater to individual student's needs. Since the breakfast program's implementation, school breakfast consumption in Flint has nearly doubled. An evaluation of the program is currently underway, but preliminary reports from school officials indicate that both attendance and school culture have improved.

OFL was instrumental in bringing together the right partners at the right time to help Flint's children during a crisis. As partners have expressed through interviews, the success of Flint's district-wide Breakfast in the Classroom program would not have been possible without OFL's ability to bring government and philanthropic organizations to the table around a shared agenda.

OFL's Key Roles in Bringing Flint's Breakfast in the Classroom Program to Life

- Identifying support gaps in operating a district-wide school breakfast program and understanding where private partners can step in to help
- Connecting the right public and private partners at the right time that would work together to implement an ambitious and successful district-wide school breakfast program in Flint

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Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Flint Residents during the Water Crisis

Connecting Flint residents to clean water and physical health services were top priorities during the Flint Water Crisis. Yet, amid early crisis relief efforts, mental health services were largely neglected. OFL and the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) were reminded of a conversation with a foundation that worked on Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts. Through this conversation, OFL and CMF learned about the importance of mental health services in helping residents manage stress and trauma following a crisis. OFL and CMF immediately shifted into high gear to identify partners that could come together to fund and bring a mobile mental health unit to Flint.

As CMF worked with New York-based Children's Health Fund to acquire their mobile mental health unit used during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, OFL connected funders,

including the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Health Endowment Fund, the Ruth Mott Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, and the Flinn Foundation, to the Genesee County Health Department to put the unit into operation.

Since the mobile mental health unit's arrival, the Flint Health Department has seen the great impact it has had on the Flint community. Many locals have expressed deep gratitude for the unit and the well-trained local Flint staff who provide the mental health services.

OFL and CMF's collaboration and their ability to quickly connect philanthropic and governmental partners facilitated the City of Flint's ability to meet the mental health needs of its residents in the wake of the Flint Water Crisis.

OFL's Key Roles in Bringing Mental Health Resources to Flint Residents

- Engaging in strategic collaboration to identify important public and private partners in providing vital crisis relief resources to Flint residents
- Bringing public and private sectors together to deliver, restore, and launch the operation of a mobile mental health unit in Flint in the wake of the Water Crisis

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Supporting Seniors' Access to Clean Water in Flint

During the Flint Water Crisis, as Flint families received clean, bottled water, many Flint seniors continued to use lead-contaminated tap water for cooking and drinking. Without accessible transportation, many seniors had bottled water delivered to their doorstep. Unfortunately, they were often unable to haul the water containers into their homes. Even if they did manage to succeed in carrying the heavy load indoors, they struggled to open the bottles, leaving them with no choice but to continue using tainted water for their daily needs.

When this clean water access issue came to OFL's attention, OFL went straight to work bringing partners together to develop a solution for Flint's seniors. Through OFL's expert facilitation, AARP Michigan, Valley Area Agency on Aging,

and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund came together to ramp up food and water delivery to Flint seniors, provide them with rubber grips so that they could open and use the delivered bottled water, and conduct a needs assessment study.

OFL also worked with the Valley Area Agency on Aging to utilize the well-known local Meals on Wheels program to deliver food and water at the same time. This ensured that seniors felt safe and did not need to struggle with the heavy water containers. By using its staff expertise, official governor-backed position, and expansive relationship network, OFL enabled partners to come together and ensure Flint's vulnerable senior population gained access to fresh, clean water throughout the Flint Water Crisis.

OFL's Key Roles in Helping Flint Seniors Access Clean Water

- Expertly facilitating connections between the public and private sectors to ramp up food and water delivery into senior's homes
- Coordinating efforts with partners to find creative clean water access solutions for Flint's seniors