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Share Our Spare Awarded $627,000 in Federal Funding to Expand Essentials for Chicago Families

Congressionally Directed Community Project will fund "Essentials for a Strong Start," strengthening diaper and early childhood supply distribution across Chicago's West and South Sides

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CHICAGO — Share Our Spare (SOS) announced today that it has been awarded $627,000 from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the FY26 Congressionally Directed Community Project program. The one-year award supports *Essentials for a Strong Start*, a project designed to expand the organization's capacity to get diapers and early childhood essentials into the hands of families who need them.

The congressionally identified purpose of the award is to support family relief initiatives for low-income families, including supplies. The project period runs from August 31, 2026 through August 30, 2027.

Share Our Spare operates the largest diaper bank in Chicago and serves families across 23 West and South Side zip codes. Diapers are not covered by SNAP or WIC, leaving families to cover one of the most basic costs of infant care entirely out of pocket, a cost that forces impossible tradeoffs against rent, food, and utilities.

"Families in our community are not short on resourcefulness. They are short on diapers, wipes, and the basic supplies that let a parent get to work and a baby stay healthy," said S. Mayumi "Umi" Grigsby, Executive Director of Share Our Spare. "This award lets us meet more of that need, and meet it faster. We are grateful to see federal investment directed to something this concrete."

With this award, SOS will purchase more than 2.3 million diapers for distribution through its network of community-based partner agencies, which together reach approximately 5,000 children ages 0 to 5 across Cook County every month. Diapers are provided to families at no cost.

The award also funds a new delivery truck and expanded warehouse storage capacity at the organization's Milwaukee Avenue Sharehouse. The added racking allows SOS to accept pallet-quantity donations it currently has to decline for lack of space, and the truck extends the organization's delivery reach to partner agencies across the region, including South Side and suburban sites, where nearly half of surveyed partners currently travel more than ten miles to pick up supplies.

Over the past four years, Share Our Spare has distributed 24.7 million diapers.

The award was secured with the support of U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, who submitted the request on behalf of Illinois families.

"Senator Duckworth understood that diapers are not a small thing. They are the difference between a parent making it to a shift and a parent staying home," Grigsby said. "Her office put this need in front of the federal government on behalf of Illinois families, and that is why this funding is going to reach children on the West and South Sides."

“No parent should have to choose between buying diapers and putting food on the table, paying for the electric bill or the gas they need to get to work,” said Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL). “This federal investment will help Share Our Spare put millions of diapers and other essentials directly into the hands of Chicago families, reach more communities in need and ensure parents can care for their children. I’m proud to accept this year’s Distinguished Civic Partner award and continue working to make sure every family has the resources they need to thrive.”

The award is administered by ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

About Share Our Spare

Share Our Spare is a Chicago-based nonprofit working to end diaper insecurity and ensure every child has the essentials for a strong start. SOS operates Chicago's largest diaper bank, serves as Chicago's affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, and partners with Family Connects Chicago to reach families in the earliest months of a child's life. Learn more at shareourspare.org.

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