Mental Health Services For At Risk Transitional Age Youth: A Grant Proposal

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The Child Welfare League of America (2009) reported that those who live in foster families or group homes have the probability of developing serious psychiatric disorders at a rate 4 times higher than children who are raised by their birth family. Despite this, less than 33% of youth in the foster care system actually receive mental health services (Child Welfare League of America, 2009).

Youth transitioning out of the foster care system often do so with little support and can face high rates of joblessness, homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, teen pregnancies, and mental health concerns (Galehouse, Herrick, & Raphel, 2010; Zlotnick, Tam, & Soman, 2012).

Mental health concerns in transitional age youth serve as an obstacle to independent living, learning to take responsibility, caring for oneself, creating an emotionally and physically supportive environment, and securing and maintaining employment (Love, Koob, & Hill, 2008).

The proposed program aimed to create mobile mental health services that met clients in their own environment whether that was in KinGap, group homes, Transitional Housing Program Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) settings, Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILP), or scattered site Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP+) locations. The proposed program was developed to assist transitional age youth in addressing mental health concerns that manifested as a result of trauma, time spent in the foster care system, or the stressors of autonomy.
The proposed program is in line with the National Association of Social Workers’ (NASW) Code of Ethics.

- The proposed program meets the service principle by attempting to provide mental health services to a population in need - transitional aged youth.

- The program addresses the social justice principle by working with vulnerable youth who often face challenges with financial stability, employment, and the judicial system.

- The program supports the principle of dignity and worth of the person by attempting to meet the youth on their terms and thus respecting their self-determination.

- The principle of the importance of human relationships is addressed through the psychoeducational support group and the use of a mentor (both of which aim to aid in the development of a support network).

- The proposed program applies the principles of integrity and competence by serving as an opportunity to train future social workers (MSW interns) on how to implement these principles into their practice.

- The proposed program also addresses NASW’s call for advocacy and empowerment by providing MSWs with opportunities to advocate on behalf of clients and by fostering clients’ abilities to advocate for themselves (via individual and group therapy; National Association of Social Workers, 2008).
Racial disproportionality exists within both the foster care system and the mental health system. Foster care statistics collected from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and mental health statistics collected from The California Healthcare Foundation show that the populations that are overrepresented in both sets of data are African Americans and Native Americans (California Healthcare Foundation, 2013; Needell et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

Populations experiencing higher percentages of admittance into the foster care system and the mental health system should be provided with mental health services throughout their experiences with either system.

African Americans and Native Americans with histories of foster care should receive mental health services as they transition into adulthood to reduce the possibility of childhood problems developing into adulthood problems.

It is roughly estimated that 5%-10% of foster care youth identify as LGBTQ. Not all LGBTQ youth disclose their sexuality while in care so the actual number of youth that identify as LGBTQ could be much higher. LGBTQ foster youth could benefit from mental health services as they have endured the trauma of entering foster care and may have faced stigma and discrimination due to their sexuality (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013b).
Target Population
- Transitional aged foster youth living primarily in Orange County, California
- Youth 16 to 21 years old who either emancipated from the foster care system, opted to remain in the system, or who have returned to the system via the use of AB-12.

Strategies to Identify Funding
- Online inquiry using the search engine Google and the terms “California social services grants”, “California mental health grants”, “foster care grants”, and “transitional age youth grants”.
- Exploration of the Grantsmanship Center website to include a systematic review of each of the top granting foundations
- After careful review, three foundations were identified: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The California Wellness Foundation.

Funding Source
- The California Wellness Foundation was ultimately chosen because it espoused the same values as the proposed program (wellness and mental health) and addressed teenage pregnancy and violence prevention (risk factors for TAY; The California Wellness Foundation, 2010).

Needs Assessment
- In order to better understand the needs of the parties involved in the development of this mental health program, the grant writer reviewed research regarding the partner agency and the TAY population and spoke with Aspiranet THP+FC program manager, Tracy Rolfe.
### Budget

**TABLE 1. Line Item Budget for Proposed Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Anticipated Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salaries</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSW</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit package @ 25%</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>18,720</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>62,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefit package @ 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefit package @ 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stipend</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interns ($3,000/intern x 6)</td>
<td>18,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent ($2,000/month x 12)</td>
<td>24,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer/resource lab</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative overhead</strong></td>
<td>26,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(@ 10% of overall total)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>$295,922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program Summary & Description
- The proposed program aims to develop mobile individual therapy services that meet clients in their own homes. Those tasked with providing the therapy (MSW interns) will be third parties in relation to the youth’s housing in an effort to increase client participation, comfort, and possibly disclosure. These third parties will have no connection to TAY’s jobs, education, or housing placements. In addition to the mobile individual therapy, transitional age youth will be given the option to participate in psychoeducational support groups and access to a mentor and resource computer lab.

Population Served
- Transitional aged foster youth receiving services from the Orange County division of Aspiranet.

Sustainability
- Sustainability for the proposed program will develop through the partnership with Aspiranet.
Program Objectives

- Goal 1: To assist transitional age foster care youth in addressing mental health concerns.
- Goal 2: To assist transitional age foster care youth in developing life skills and supportive networks.
- Goal 3: To provide transitional age foster youth with guidance and connections to resources.

Program Evaluation

- Evaluation consulting services will be provided by Harder+Company Community Research and will be financed through the administrative overhead. Harder+Company Community Research is a consulting service that provides nonprofits, public agencies, and foundations with statistics on the impact of their programs and recommendations on how to improve (Harder+Company Community Research, n.d.).
Lessons Learned
- The significance of research within a grant
- How to garner agency support
- How to locate foundations and complete a grant application
- How to develop a program

Implications for Social Work
- The proposed program allows youth to benefit from interaction with personnel who are concerned with a youth’s holistic functioning.
- The proposed program allows social workers to implement all core values of the NASW Code of Ethics - making the program a good training tool for interns and a thoughtful approach to working with the TAY population.
- The proposed program allows for the development of advocacy and self advocacy.


