AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM FOR PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
A GRANT PROPOSAL

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Introduction

Problem

- The Children’s Bureau Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting Systems (AFCARS) (2012), reported that approximately 400,540 children were in foster care on September 30, 2011 in the United States.

- Children in foster care who have experienced unstable placements are twice as likely to develop behavioral problems as children who had not been in the foster care system (Rubin et al., 2007).

- Children, who are placed in foster care, may experience an interruption in establishing secure attachments attributable to the lack of foster homes and the instability in certain placements (Jones-Harden, 2004).

- According to Schofield and Beek (2005) challenges that appear in maltreated foster children include a distorted sense of security and lack of trust which can often be reflected in the child’s poor interpersonal relationships across the life span.

Goals

- The overarching goal of the program is to provide foster children a safe environment where they can learn to cope in healthy ways and to reduce the number of placements due to problematic behaviors.
Social Work Relevance

- According to the National Association of Social Work’s (NASW; 2008) Code of Ethics, social workers are to provide services to people in need and address their social problems.
- This program’s focus is centered on addressing the need to provide therapeutic services to foster children with a concentration on behavioral problems to reduce future disruptions in foster placements.
- The NASW Code of Ethics recognizes the importance of human relationships and this is essential in this proposed program. Foster parents and social workers will demonstrate healthy relationships based on trust and care to the foster children.
- The program will incorporate these relationships by providing foster parents with tools to use to communicate and manage their foster child’s behavioral problems.
Cross-Cultural Relevance

- California has the largest foster care population in the nation (AFCARS, 2009). Of the estimated 400,540 children in foster care in the United States in 2011 41% were Caucasian, 27% were African American, 21% were Latino and 10% were of other races or multiracial. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2011), foster care affects all ethnic groups.

- According to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (2013) African American children are the most overrepresented population in foster care across the United States. In 2011, the population of African American children was 14%; compared to 30% of African American children entering the foster care system in the country. In addition, the percentage of Native American children also entering care was 2% when Native Americans make up 1% of the general population (NCJFC, 2013).

- The program’s goal is to work with the different populations that are involved in the foster care system and provide the intervention to successfully help children of all ethnicities to improve their well-being. The host agency for this program serves a diverse population. The host agency is currently serving 78 children and 55 families. It is pertinent that those working with foster children be knowledgeable of different behaviors and traditions children may demonstrate as a result of their cultural background. Being aware of cultural diversity can help foster parents and social workers assess the child’s emotional needs more appropriately.
Methods

Target Population

- The target population for this grant is foster children and foster parents served by the nonprofit foster family and adoption agency, Serenity Infant Care Homes in Covina, California. Serenity Infant Care Homes specializes in infants; the children’s ages in the agency vary from newborn to 5 years old. These preschool age children have demonstrated symptoms of emotional/behavioral disorders and who, therefore, are likely to fail in a conventional preschool or are at risk of experiencing placement transfers. Serenity Infant Care Homes receives foster care placements from four surrounding counties, including Los Angeles County, Orange County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino Counties.

Strategies Used in Selecting Funding

- There are a variety of methods that were utilized to seek funding for this grant. Searches were completed on the local, state, and national levels. Grant databases from the local public library, as well as the California State University, Long Beach library were utilized. The Internet was also utilized to complete searches using key words such as “foster care,” “DCFS,” “foster children,” “child welfare,” “children and families,” and “placement disruptions.” The Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership and The Grantsmanship Center were visited.

Funding Source

- The California Community Foundation was selected as the potential funder for the program. The California Community Foundation (CCF) was established as a charitable foundation in 1915. The Foundation has focused on empowering donors on pursuing their own personal goals and collaborating with the CCF to improve and transform the greater Los Angeles area.
Methods

Sources Used for the Needs Assessment

- The services, care and support that this population needs appropriate services were assessed. Information was obtained from scholarly journal articles and the host agency Serenity Infant Care Homes’ website. Data were also retrieved from government websites such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Children’s Bureau Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting Systems, and the Department of Children and Family Services in order to identify the crucial needs of this population.

Projected Budget Range and Categories

- The total annual operating budget for this program is $137,100. The amount being requested from the grantor is $107,100. The funding will include salaries for a masters level social workers (MSW) program coordinator, a family therapist, operational costs, direct and indirect program costs, and administration.
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Program Summary and Description

- The Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers (MTFC-P) was adapted from The Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care program; the origin of the program was targeted to foster youth with delinquent behaviors (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998). The MTFC-P is effective at promoting secured attachments in foster care and facilitating permanent placements. This intervention emphasizes encouragement on pro-social learning, setting limits to abusive behaviors, consistency and close supervision (Fisher et al., 2005).

- The foster children are provided with individual therapy in addition to a weekly playgroup. Foster parents are provided with a foster parent consultant, weekly support groups and supervision.

Population Served

- The proposed program is an evidenced-based intervention for foster children between the ages of 3-5 years old who exhibit a high level of behavioral problems and are at high risk for placement instability. The population will include children in the foster care system placed within the Serenity Infant Care Home foster family agency.
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Program Objectives

- The program’s objectives are as follows: By the program’s completion, foster parents who participate will notice a decrease in the children’s negative behaviors by completing the Child Behavior Checklist before and after participating in the program.
- The foster children who participate will have learned appropriate social skills and be able to develop healthy relationships with their peers and adult caregivers. Foster children will have taken valuable skills from their playgroup sessions and apply them to outside settings such as schools or social events.
- Foster children who participate will remain in their placement of origin unless they are able to successfully reunify with their biological parents as seen in ending the foster care placement.
- The foster children will demonstrate appropriate play skills such as sharing and taking turns in their playgroup sessions.

Program Evaluation

- The foster parents will be given a pre-test to establish a baseline for the foster children’s behavior. The evaluation tool to measure the children’s behavior and coping skills will be the Child’s Behavior Checklist (CBCL). The pre-test will have questions addressing the children’s behaviors, coping skills, and social relations at the initial point of the program. At the end of the program, the CBCL will be administered to the foster parents to assess if there was improvement in the children’s behaviors and coping skills. In addition to the post-test, the families who participated will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their overall satisfaction through a questionnaire (rated on a scale 1 to 10).
Social Work Implications

- There are currently 400,540 children in foster care in the United States (AFCARS, 2012). Many of these children will experience one or more placement disruptions while in foster care. Foster children will have a disadvantage in building self-esteem, trusting relationships, and experience negative physiological effects (Unrau et al., 2008).

- Foster children are at risk for higher rates of mental health disorders, aggressive behaviors, and lower social skill functioning (Darwish et al., 2001). The MTFC-P is designed to reduce and eliminate such problematic behaviors that can ultimately affect their foster care placements and their adulthood.

- Social workers advocate for their clients and have the responsibility to ensure the basic needs of all people are met. This includes children entering foster care who are one of the most vulnerable populations. In order for social workers to meet obligations proposed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) it is important to understand what promotes and inhibits successful placement outcomes for foster children (NASW, 2008). The more information obtained on how to enhance the well-being of foster children, the more capable social workers can be to ensure their basic human needs are met.
References


