The Autism Parent Project:  
A Support Group for Parents:  
A Grant Proposal

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Introduction

- ASD is known to be one of the fastest growing developmental disabilities (Twoy, Conolly & Novak, 2007).

- 6.7 out of every 1,000 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

- The CDC (2008) reported that 1 in 88 children 8 years of age living with autism in the United States.

- Raising a child with autism can cause a drastic change in the family system. According to Magana and Smith (2006), having a child diagnosed with ASD is followed by many changes to a parent’s life.

- Much research has suggested that parents of children with autism experience a higher level of anxiety, depression, and anger due to the long-term effects of their children’s diagnosis (Banach, Iudice, Conway, & Couse, 2010; Bilgin & Kucuk, 2010; Hutton & Caron, 2005).

- After a child is diagnosed with ASD, the child’s parents experience a period wherein they go through an adjustment phase of their child’s diagnosis.

- Many parents tend to have feelings of sadness, anger, depression, and disagreement (Banach et al., 2010).
Helping parents who have children with ASD by providing them with supportive services to help them adjust to their children’s diagnosis is essential. Parents are often left grieving once their child has been diagnosed and left in a vulnerable state of mind due to the hardships that come with raising a child with ASD. Social workers work on empowering individuals who are disenfranchised. As social workers, it is their duty to help others who have been underserved. As social workers, they value the importance of human relationships and having strong social support is essential for this population. According to the National Association of Social Workers (2008), one of their core values include respecting the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Social workers must develop competency in working with families who have a child diagnosed with ASD (Preece & Jordan, 2006). Parents are often overlooked because they are not thought to be directly affected by ASD. Helping parents by empowering them to advocate for their children is an important part of social change.
Cross-Cultural Relevance

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) does not discriminate; it affects children and families of all ethnic backgrounds (Mandell et al., 2009). ASD can affect families of all different backgrounds without regards to their cultural and/or ethnic background or their socioeconomic status. Racial and ethnic disparities exist in the early identification of ASD particularly among medically underserved minorities (Mandell et al., 2009). A CDC study found no differences between the proportion of non-Hispanic White and African American parents reporting their child had a diagnosis of ASD; however, Latino parents were less likely to say that their child had been diagnosed with ASD (CDC, 2012). Children diagnosed with ASD who are Latino and African American are less likely to receive quality health care (Magana, Parish, Rose, Timberlake, & Swaine, 2012).
Methods

A. **Target Population:** The target population is parents of children with ASD. Specifically, the program will target parents of children who have a diagnosis of ASD that reside in Pico Rivera and nearby cities.

B. **Strategies used to identify and select a funding source:** The process of identifying a potential foundation funding source was completed primarily by an Internet search and by visiting the Center for Non-Profit Management in Southern California: Non-profit Resource Library Center for Healthy Communities, located in Los Angeles. This grant writer used Google and Yahoo search engines including using the links and resources provided by the library at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) social work link. With the assistance of the California State University, Long Beach social work librarian and using key words such as: grants/autism/California, grants/ caregivers/California, grants/ family/California, this writer selected and searched a few Web sites that include grants.gov, grantfinder.gov, grantmanship.org and grantogropher.com.

C. **Identify the funding source selected:** The Annenberg Foundation was chosen primarily because their mission is to support nonprofit organizations involved in the community through the funding of projects that improve public well-being. The Annenberg Foundation gives priority to nonprofit organizations that serve communities in Los Angeles County. The foundation emphasizes the efforts of nonprofit organizations that are well integrated within the communities they serve.
C. Identify the funding source selected (cont...)
The Annenberg Foundation has funded over 150 grants within the Los Angeles area of which range between $500- $1,000,000 (The Annenberg Foundation, n.d.). The foundation has supported community programs that include the Boys and Girls Club of the Los Angeles Harbor, the GRYD Foundation, and Jovenes Inc.

D. Sources used for the needs assessment:
Data bases such as the United States Census, the Los Angeles Department of Health, the Los Angeles County Health Survey 2007, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health June 2009 Key Indicators of Health by Service Planning Area (SPA) and the County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau were accessed. There are approximately 63,522 residents in the city of Pico Rivera (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

E. Projected budget range and categories:
Indirect Program Expenses- $18,565.00
Direct Program Expenses-$185,646.00
In-Kind Program Support-$6,000.00
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Total Program Cost: $210,221.00
A. Program Summary and Description:

The program will provide interventions that will help parents deal with the adjustment of having their child diagnosed with ASD through supporting parents in coping to the life adjustment. The program will provide a monthly orientation to serve approximately 200 families over the course of the year. The monthly orientation will be provided for new first time participants in order to engage parents and introduce the program. The program will also provide ongoing psychoeducation through support groups for an estimated 100 families participating during the year. Individual counseling will be provided to families as needed up to 50 over the course of the grant.

The program will ultimately help parents learn to manage their child’s challenging behaviors, and it will also provide parents with a deeper understanding of ASD through psychoeducation. Parents will become educated on the mental health risks of families who have a child with ASD. The project will also provide parents with referrals to proper and useful resources that will empower parents to advocate for their child in regards to community resources and educational resources available for this population.

B. Population served: The target population is parents of children with ASD. Specifically, the program will target parents of children who have a diagnosis of ASD that reside in Pico Rivera and nearby cities.
C. Program Objectives:
Objective 1: To recruit and hire staff.
Objective 2: Identify families who need services.
Objective 3: Provide psychoeducation and brief therapy to 130 families.
Objective 4: Increase family empowerment and reduce parental distress.
Objective 5: Measure program activities.

D. Program Evaluation:
The program supervisor will evaluate program through survey phone calls. Program evaluation will consist of Thomas, Yoshioka, and Ager’s Life Distress Inventory Scale (LDI); (1993) and the Family Empowerment Scale (FES); (Koren, DeChillo, & Friesen, 1992). The LDI measurement tool will help in measuring the current level of distress in different areas of life as well as helping in determining how to reduce distress. The FES is an instrument used to measure the empowerment of a parent of a disabled child. Pretests using the LDI and FES will be conducted initially at time of orientation, both scales will be used in post-test as well. Program supervisor will collect data of satisfaction surveys and data from pre-test and post-test to conduct overall program evaluation.
Lessons Learned

This grant writer learned that there are many different factors that contribute to an individual’s sense of empowerment. In working on this project, grant writer learned the importance of having access to the most recent information available in order to have reliable data. Conducting extensive research is a valuable and important skill needed to have a successful outcome. Being resourceful and finding different methods to complete the project was necessary.

As social workers, it is important to work on advocating improving policies that help parents of children with ASD and other disabilities. Many policies encourage services for the person with the disability but forget that the disorder affects the whole family unit. There is limited information and services for parents of children with ASD. Working with families to empower them is an important focus in social work. The NASW’s core value of Social Justice emphasizes that social workers strive to ensure access to needed information (NASW Code of Ethics, 2008). Developing this grant gives educates parents and gives them access to information on services and policies that support this population, of which access to many services has made it difficult for parents to gain.
References


