NURTURING PARENTING PROGRAM FOR PARENTS AND THEIR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN: A GRANT PROPOSAL

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Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment is of significant concern given the number of children it impacts and the negative consequences that can occur in children and families as a result of this societal problem (Graham et al., 2010; Perry, 2012).

In 2012, 3.4 million alleged child maltreatment referrals involving 6.3 million children were made to child protective services (CPS) within the United States. Among those referrals, 62% were accepted, resulting in CPS involvement and disposition.

Child protective services assessments and investigations revealed that 78% of the child victims experienced neglect; 18% experienced physical abuse; and 9% experienced sexual abuse.

Additionally, in 2012, the majority (80%) of child abuse and neglect perpetrators were parents of the victims. Within the perpetrators who identified as parents, 88% were the biological parents (USDHHS, 2012).

Child maltreatment can have potential adverse consequences for children and their families (Anthonysamy & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Widom, Czaja, Bentley, & Johnson, 2012).

A combination of parental, familial and child risk factors contribute to the occurrence of child maltreatment (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, & Kennedy, 2003).

Children maltreatment has been linked to challenges in children’s physical, psychological, behavioral, social and academic functioning (Houck, Nugent, Lescano, Peters, & Brown, 2010; Skonk & Cicchetti, 2001).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this grant proposal project was to identify potential funding sources and write a grant to fund the Nurturing Parent Program at Helpline Youth Counseling, Incorporated located in Norwalk, California.

The goal of the Nurturing Parenting Program is to prevent and reduce child maltreatment among vulnerable families that have elementary school-aged children.

Understanding common risk factors can also assist in the development of prevention and intervention for child maltreatment.

Child Maltreatment Continued

Child maltreatment prevention and intervention strategies such as parent education and support programs work to improve parenting skills and strengthen families by addressing child maltreatment risk factors that hinder positive family functioning (Goldman et al., 2003).

Since parents are responsible for the majority of child maltreatment, it is imperative that child maltreatment prevention/intervention programs emphasize parent-focused strategies that promote positive parenting practices, healthy parent-child bonding, understanding of child development knowledge and appropriate child behavior management skills (Cowen, 2001).

Parent programs should also strive to improve parental protective factors such as resiliency, empowerment, emotional well-being, coping skills, communication skills, social connections and supports for parents (Lundahl, Nimer, & Parsons, 2006).

Given the extent of and challenges related to child maltreatment, social workers should seek funding and write grants for the creation and implementation of prevention/intervention parenting programs to help mitigate the risk of child maltreatment.

Understanding common risk factors can also assist in the development of prevention and intervention for child maltreatment.
The well-being and overall quality of life for children and their families is a central concern and area of involvement for social workers.

Social work practitioners advocate on behalf of children, their families and those individuals who cannot advocate for themselves.

Child maltreatment can have negative long-term effects on a child’s future; thus, evidence-based, culturally competent prevention/intervention measures should be a priority for all social workers working to assist vulnerable families at risk or currently experiencing child maltreatment.

To be successful in preventing or reducing child maltreatment, social workers must work with the child and the child’s family in a culturally relevant fashion.

It is also important that social workers be aware of barriers families may face to participating in child maltreatment parenting programs.

It is anticipated that implementation of this proposed evidence-based, nurturing parent education/support program will prevent and reduce child maltreatment within participating families.
**Cross-Cultural Relevance**

- In 2013, California had a total of 482,383 child maltreatment allegations and 83,981 (17%) substantiated victims of child maltreatment (Needell et al., 2015). Among the total victims in California, 54% identified as Latino (Needell et al., 2014a).

- In 2013, Latinos comprised of 38.4% of the entire population in California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014a), suggesting Latino children are over-represented in the child welfare system.

- Between the years of 2009 - 2013, 13% of individuals in the city of Norwalk lived below the poverty level and Latinos comprised of 70% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014b).

- The proposed program will serve all populations; however, given the geographic location, Latinos are the largest population who will be served. Thus, it will be important for program personnel to be bilingual (fluent in English and Spanish) and all curriculum materials to be available in both languages.

- Language barriers may negatively impact collaboration between program service providers and Latino families; hence, it is valuable that program service providers speak the preferred language and are culturally competent (Garcia, Aisenberg, & Hirachi, 2012).

- Along with culturally competent social work engagement, cultural awareness of diverse cultures parenting practices and traditions will be considered in the construction of this program.

- The program curriculum has been adapted to take into account multicultural differences among families and provides program personnel with education on multicultural parenting practices and ways to integrate cultural beliefs/traditions into the program (Cowen, 2001).

- To increase program participation among vulnerable populations, program components such as home visits to personally invite/engage diverse families and group sessions offered at best times available to families will be incorporated in the proposed program.

- Conducting home visits to introduce parenting programs and engage families has been shown to increase the likelihood that Latino families participate in parenting programs (Garcia et al., 2012).
Methods

• **Target Population**
  o The program will be implemented at Helpline Youth Counseling (HYC) located in Norwalk, California.
  o The proposed program will serve families that have elementary school-aged children enrolled in the 11 Norwalk elementary schools within the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District (NLMUSD).
  o It is anticipated that approximately 150 families will be served per year.

• **Identification of Potential Funding Sources**
  o The grant writer explored funding possibilities at the federal, state and foundation levels.

• **Federal and State Levels**
  o The selection of potential funding opportunities began with the grant writer completing an Internet search to locate possible funding sources.
  o Key words for the Internet searches included parent education, family functioning, child maltreatment, child abuse/neglect, and prevention.
  o After reviewing all federal and state grant opportunities, the grant writer did not find a funding source that matched the purpose of the proposed program.

• **Foundation Level**
  o Next, the grant writer completed an Internet search to explore foundation level funding.
  o The full search resulted in 5 potentially appropriate foundations.
  o The thesis advisor and grant writer went through each of the 5 foundation websites for the foundation's mission statement, special interests and purpose, and explored their grant databases to better understand history of project funding.

• **Foundation Level Continued**
  o The grant writer then used FC Search software at the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership to further explore and finalize foundation level funding possibilities.
  o While searching for grant makers, the grant writer utilized delineators such as, fields of interest, types of support, total giving, and geographic focus.
  o Subject terms used during the FC search included human services, family services, program development, parent education, prevention, child abuse, and child maltreatment.
  o The initial search populated 128 foundations.
  o The grant writer then narrowed down the results by total giving amount and geographic location to yield 16 foundations.
  o After reviewing all 16 foundation profiles individually, the grant writer eliminated all but 6 foundations.
  o To some extent, the 6 foundations, were the same as those identified in the Internet search.
  o The grant writer and thesis advisor thoroughly reviewed the websites of each of these foundations.

• **Selection Criteria**
  o The selection criteria considered when determining the final funding source of the grant proposal project included goodness of fit between the proposed program and funding source goals, location and geographic restrictions, eligibility requirements, as well as levels of funding.
  o In addition to the selection criteria, the final funding decision was agreed upon collaboratively with the HYC Director of Family Services.
  o After all these steps were completed it was decided that the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation was the most fitting funding source for the proposed program.
Methods

- **Selected Funding Source**
  - **The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation**
    - The purpose of the foundation is to support Los Angeles County nonprofit organizations focusing primarily on four main areas of interests including, social impact, higher education, health, and civic and cultural grant-making.
    - The grant will be written for the social impact area. Under the social impact area, the foundation supports programs that target underserved children, families, and senior populations (Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014).

- **Sources for Grants Needs Assessment**
  - The sources of information was drawn from the Helpline Youth Counseling (2014) website (organization’s mission, history, description, service area, staffing characteristics, and current programs/services), and the Norwalk La-Mirada Unified School District data (student ethnicities, languages spoken, socioeconomic status, and parent’s level of education).
  - Other sources of information was drawn from child maltreatment literature and the University of California Child Welfare Indicators Project website (number of children with child maltreatment allegations).

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<th>TABLE 1. Line-Item Budget</th>
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<td>ONE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION</td>
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<td>Program Supervisor</td>
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<td>Parent Educator</td>
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Program Description

- The proposed program is an evidence-based program that has been used extensively, the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP).
- The NPP is a cutting-edge child maltreatment prevention/intervention program designed to give parents the guidance and skills they need to be effective parents and raise healthy children.
- This NPP focuses on reducing child maltreatment risk factors while increasing familial protective factors to build stronger family relationships (Cowen, 2001).
- Through group-based intervention families will learn to change negative existing parenting skills, sharpen current parenting skills and develop new nurturing parenting skills.
- The NPP has been evaluated substantially and found to be effective with diverse families (Bavolek, 2009; Devall, 2004).
- This exciting new program offers the opportunity for the families to receive education and support service together.
- Child maltreatment prevention/intervention programs that engage in family-centered activities and parent-child nurturing result in better outcomes for youth and families (Webster-Stratton, 2007).

Population Served

- In 2013, the city of Norwalk had a total of 1,117 children with child maltreatment allegations (Needell et al., 2014b). That means there were 39.2 incidence of child maltreatment allegations per every 1,000 children.
- In the 2013-2014 school year, 19,370 children enrolled in NLMUSD schools.
- Of those 19,370 children, the majority (79%) identified as Hispanic or Latino, followed by White (10%; California Department of Education, 2014a).
- 17% of the children were English learners and 76% were socioeconomically disadvantaged (California Department of Education, 2014a).
- 20% of parents in the district did not complete high school (California Department of Education, 2014c).
- Given the large percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged Latino children in the NLMUSD, this culturally competent program is needed to best serve vulnerable populations.

Program Goal and Objectives

- Goal: The goal of the NPP program is to prevent and reduce child maltreatment among families.

Objective 1: The NPP staff will train HYC staff/school staff and recruit 150 elementary school-aged families in a one-year period.

- 2 culturally competent program educators will be hired to implement this new program. Program educators will be required to be fluent in English and Spanish.
- Program educators will attend a three-day Facilitator Training Workshop to review the components of the NPP curriculum and learn how to implement and effectively facilitate the program.
- Families will be referred by HYC school-based counselors at targeted elementary schools and by school staff.
- Program educators will provide training for elementary school staff and HYC school counselors on how to identify and recruit families for the program. Parents may also voluntarily refer themselves to the program.
- Program educators will make home visits to explain the program and engage the family once a referral is received.

Objective 2: Program educators will facilitate 3 separate group cycles for parents and children, each cycle will last 15 consecutive weeks.

- Families will attend a 2.5 hour group session once a week for 15 weeks.
- Group sessions will begin with the parents and children meeting in separate groups and then both groups will be combined for parent-child nurturing/bonding time.
- The parent-only group will be facilitated by a Parent Educator and the child-only group will be facilitated by a Child Educator and a Child Educator intern.
- The parent and child groups will cover the same material but the content will be geared to the specific audience.
- Children will be learning and practicing similar concepts their parents are learning to encourage a smooth transition from the program to the family’s home.
- Both parent and child group sessions will routinely include warm welcomes, check-ins/icebreakers and group circle time.
Grant Proposal

Program Objectives Continued

- Group sessions will provide parent education on child development, age-appropriate parenting practices and positive disciplinary practices. The Parent Educator will address negative child development expectations and educate parents on school-aged child development. Audiovisual and role-play exercises will be used to provide parents with demonstrations of positive/alternative discipline techniques and opportunities to practice nurturing parenting skills.

- During group sessions, the Parent Educator will assist parents in developing positive stress management strategies and reinforce the importance of parental self-nurturance (Marcynyszyn, Maher, & Corwin, 2011). The Parent Educator will also open group discussions to foster mutual aid and peer support for parents experiencing stress. This will empower parents and provide a safe social outlet.

- While parents are provided education/support, children will be participating in separate skill-building group sessions. Groups will assist the children in learning behavioral-social skills, how to handle anger, problem solve, compromise, conflict-resolution, understand and communicate feelings (Cowen, 2001).

- Group sessions will conclude with parent-child nurturing/bonding time. Given the program is in the evening, food will be served for the entire family together, providing another opportunity for bonding. During this time, families will also engage in expressive art activities, musical activities, games and positive child-directed play (Bavolek, 2009).

- Handbooks will be given to parents so they can review group content prior to sessions.
- Homework will also be given to families to practice new skills and family changes will be discussed each week.
- Families will be responsible for keeping family logs to document changes such as positive or negative behaviors/interactions as well as parental coping strategies.
- To encourage program participation, groups will be offered in early and late evenings. Program incentives such as raffle prizes will be given weekly.
- At the last group parents and children will be awarded certificates of completion.

Program Objectives Continued

- Objective 3: As result of program participation, parents will self-report significant improvement in child development knowledge and child-rearing attitudes, increases in understanding and use of age-appropriate parenting practices, and improvement in parent-child nurturing and bonding as evidenced by inventories and self-report on standardized measures.

Program Evaluation

- The Family Social History Questionnaire will be completed prior to the start of the program to obtain family demographic information, childhood history and rates regarding quality of life.
- Program attendance will be tracked using weekly sign in sheets.
- Program Evaluation Forms will be offered to parents after each group session to rate effectiveness of the particular session and satisfaction with the overall program.
- Outcomes will be measured using tools developed for the NPP. All measurement tools will be administered on the first and last group sessions.
- The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (APPI-2) will assess child rearing/parenting attitudes/beliefs and parental strengths and weaknesses.
- The Nurturing Skills Competency Scale (NSCS) will assess comprehension of child development and use of the appropriate parenting practices as reported by the parents.
- Together the AAPI-2 and the NSCS will generate an index of child maltreatment risk severity for participating families.
- NPP offers on-line program evaluation services. The Parent Educator along with the Child Educator will be responsible for entering all pre- and post-test data on-line and generating appropriate reports.
Lessons Learned/Implications for Social Work Practice

Lessons Learned
- The grant writer learned that a thorough literature review on child maltreatment was valuable to fully comprehend the scope of problem that the proposed program hoped to address.
- The grant writer learned how to associate the consequences of the problem and the risk factors for the problem in selecting an evidence-based program to implement and address the problem.
- Gaining knowledge of effective parent education/support programs was very beneficial in designing the grant project because the grant writer was able to identify key concepts and common components of evidence-based programs.
- The grant writer also learned how to explore funding on federal, state and foundation levels with the guidance of her thesis advisor.
- The grant writer learned that reviewing potential foundation websites for goodness of fit, eligibility requirements, geographic restrictions, history of funding and levels of funding was critical in finalizing a funding match.
- A considerable amount of time was spent developing a program that was feasible, culturally relevant, and effective in addressing the social problem of child maltreatment.
- In developing the project goal and objectives, the grant writer referenced the evidence-based parenting programs discussed in the literature review. Likewise, she referenced those programs to construct the proposed program structure and components.
- Another lesson the grant writer acquired is that evidence-based social work research is important for inputting data into grant writing and meeting funding requirements.
- In terms of collaboration with the host organization, the grant writer learned that it is important to keep a constant relationship and remain in contact with the organization for grant proposal writing and program development.
- The grant writer also acquired newly learned information on creating a budget and budget narrative. She will likely try to receive clarification and feedback from grant-writing experts in her future practice as she found it very insightful in creating a budget for a grant.
- The grant writer additionally learned that foundations value evaluation outcomes. She learned that it is important to measure outcomes of behaviors, attitudes, knowledge and skills that can transfer to better lives for families after the program has ended.

Implications for Social Work Practice
- Social work involvement in the prevention and reduction of child maltreatment can be demonstrated through direct practice such as facilitation of parenting programs or indirectly through seeking funding for effective parenting programs.
- Regardless of micro or macro levels of social work involvement, researching evidence-based programs is great for future practice in that it combines best research, clinical expertise, and includes client beliefs and traditions all useful to working with vulnerable populations.
- Having a deeper understanding of various evidence-based parenting programs can assist social workers in making decisions about best interventions for their clients.
- Social workers must stay current with evolving social work knowledge and utilize evaluation outcomes as well as evidence-based research in their practice.
- Social workers should also conduct culturally sensitive research when designing and implementing parenting programs.
- Programs that address language barriers and provide intervention relevant to diverse populations benefit ethnic groups and meet their specific needs.
- It is also valuable for social workers to obtain grant-writing skills to advocate on behalf of their clients and bring awareness to social issues such as child maltreatment.
- Social workers can collaborate with grant administrators and other professionals to offer appropriate culturally competent services and programs to address client needs.
- It is expected that social workers write grants to seek funding for evidence-based parenting programs that are culturally sensitive and potentially better than existing programs.
- It is also important for social workers to acquire solid grant-writing skills because potential funding sources such as foundations fund based on the strength of grant writing.
- Social workers obtaining good grant writing skills also appear to be more readily salable and marketable for social work jobs as well as possess important skills that ultimately can create positive social change.
References