A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FOSTER PARENTS CARING FOR CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM: A GRANT PROPOSAL

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Introduction

• 12 out of every 1,000 children globally and 1 in 88 nationally are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the incidence rate is increasing (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Kopetz & Endowed, 2012).

• Children with disabilities are overrepresented in the foster care system. In 2009, children with disabilities made up approximately 4% of children in the United States yet suffer maltreatment at a rate of 11% (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012b; Cousins, 2009).

• in Orange County, California there were 8,614 children with a diagnosis of Autism receiving special education services. This was the third highest diagnosis for children receiving services second to specific learning disabilities and speech and language impairments (Orange County, 2013).

• examined data on 43,306 children between 3 and 18 years of age whom all have a primary or secondary diagnosis of Autistic Disorder. This study found that 9.5% of these children were in foster care (Rubin, Feudtner, Localio, & Mandell, 2004)

Goal
• It is expected that after participating in this program, foster parents will be more knowledgeable about the diagnosis of autism and the common related behaviors and challenges. With this understanding, caregivers will be better equipped to navigate the journey with the youth. The support that the caregivers will receive from other foster parents will offer collaboration, strategies, and techniques for success.
Social Work Relevance

- Compounding this with autism spectrum disorder can create a uniquely challenging situation.
- Social workers match children who have been separated from their birth families with foster families who will best meet their needs and ensuring their safety and well-being.
- The National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics
  - Service and Social Justice: utilize knowledge, skills and resources to create social change particularly on behalf of vulnerable peoples (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).
  - Integrity: social workers behave and practice with an honest and responsible approach (National Association of Social Workers, 2008)
  - Competence: social workers ensure their own competence as well as the competence of others to whom their clients are referred.
  - For children who have been separated from their families, there is no one more influential on their wellbeing than their caregivers and utilize proper training and preparation (Pasztor & McFadden, 2006).
Cross-cultural Relevance

- ASD is about five times more prevalent in males (1 in 54) than in females (1 in 252) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

- ASD occurs across all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and country of origin (Kopetz & Endowewed, 2012).

- Males in foster care were found to have higher rates of disabilities (Hill, 2012).

**Representation of Child Ethnicities in Orange County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent of population</th>
<th>Percent in foster care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Child Welfare Information Gateway; 2012a, Orange County, 2013b; Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery, 2011)
Methods

Target Population
• Foster parents in Orange County, California who care for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum

Funder Identification and Selection
• An internet based search using www.google.com using key terms such as “grant funding”, “autism grants”, “foster parent grants”, and “grants for children”
• A funder with an interest in working with diverse populations, involved in the community at agency levels in order to enact change, and an interest in serving children and strengthening birth and foster families

Selected Funder
• The Annenberg Foundation has a commitment to increasing community education, health, and opportunity for grown and social progress.

Needs Assessment
• Information for the grant was obtained through the partner agency, county reports and statistics, and additional data sources. Additional resources, such as the California Department of Education or the Health provided a glimpse into the pervasiveness of autism in children and youth for the county.
## Project Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator Benefits @25%</td>
<td>$13,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Provider</td>
<td>$27,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intern Stipend 4@$1,000</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Cost:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program supplies (pens, paper, binders)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential activity supplies (gloves, goggles, yarn, headphones)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Cost:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Overhead (10% program cost)</td>
<td>$10,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Kind:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office space</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tables, chairs</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator computer</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projector</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Cost:</strong></td>
<td>$114,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grant Proposal

Program Design
• psycho-education group
  – Diagnosis of ASD
• Peer support for the caregivers.

Participants
• Foster parents in Orange County, California who are either currently caring for, or are interested in caring for, children who have a diagnosis of ASD.
• The participants must be licensed foster parents with Orange County Social Services Agency, and completed the agency’s pre-service training program.

Program Design
• 6 month series of 3 hour group meetings twice a month.
• First half of meeting is focused on education and activities
• Second half is peer support group
Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

• The overarching vision is that foster families will be more supportive and stable for children who have an ASD diagnosis

The program will achieve this by three measurable goals and objectives:
• **Goal 1:** Foster parents will increase knowledge of the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
  – Objective: Foster parents will participate in bi-weekly training and support groups. The participants will take a pre and post test regarding the diagnosis.
  – Outcome: By the end of the training program, the participants will increase their scores by 50%.

• **Goal 2:** Foster Parents will be familiar with common behaviors and challenges faced by caretakers of youth with autism
  – Objective: Foster parents will be more knowledgeable of common challenging behaviors.
  – Outcome: Participants will be able to name at least five common behaviors displayed by youth with autism.

• **Goal 3:** Foster parents will provide support and suggestions to their peers during bi-weekly meetings.
  – Objective: Participants will grow their support system as well as receive some tips for managing symptoms of autism.
  – Outcome: By the end of the program, participants will be able identify one peer from the group they will call if they are overwhelmed. They will also be able to describe five tips that were shared in the program.
Lessons Learned and Implications for Social Work

In Practice

• Professionals and foster parents working with children with disabilities must increase their knowledge
• A deeper understanding of the indicators and implications of the disability on the children, birth families, and foster families will facilitate more competent practice.
• Knowledge of the services, support, and policies available to foster parents and the children for whom they care will allow social workers to better serve the needs of these families (Hill, 2012)

In Policy

• Streamline and simplify the system as well as made uniform across counties and states.
  – System-wide regulations will produce a better service for foster parents, birth parents, and children.
• Put into practice increased resources, support programs, peer mentoring opportunities, and educational programs for foster parents (Pasztor, Hollinger, Inkelas, & Halfon, 2006; Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000; Kortekamp, & Ehrle, 2002; Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2002).
References


