PSYCHOEDUCATION PROGRAM FOR KHMER ROUGE SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

Robert Smith
California State University, Long Beach
May 2015
Introduction

The period between April 1975- January 1979, the war left many Cambodian survivors fleeing their homes to seek refuge in surrounding Southeast Asian. Cambodians had witnessed and experienced trauma and death within their families and friends, and/or the loss of their children through concentration camps throughout the Khmer Rouge regime (Chan, 2004; Williams, 2005). Because of this, many Cambodians have dealt with various stressors such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and other mental health related symptoms and conditions (Williams, 2005).

Hsu and colleagues’ (2004) found that many survivors struggled with using mental health services due to their cultural beliefs about mental health, lack of understanding of Western mental health services, and limited access to mental health care. Because of a lack of mental health services for the Cambodian community, many Cambodian survivors have limited access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services for older adults who lived through the Pol Pot regime (Dubus, 2009; H. Lee, Lytle, Yang, & Lum, 2010; Snowden, Masland, Peng, Wei-Mien Lou, & Wallace, 2011).

The goals of this program were: (1) to help promote mental health awareness among the Khmer Rouge survivors and their family members, (2) to help them understand their biopsychosocial functioning and their experiences from the ecological perspectives, (3) to reduce the misperception of mental health and mental health services, and (4) to decrease the stigma attached to mental health services in order to effectively reduce the barriers against receiving the helpful services available for them.
Social Work Relevance

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics addresses the importance of understanding the human relationship and essentially helping underserved populations to obtain the necessary services (2008). Therefore, there is a need to advocate for the necessary services that allows Cambodians to seek the help. Social workers need to consider the cultural sensitive issue of stigma in the community; this coincides with the social work ethics and values. This will require social workers to develop cultural awareness, knowledge on cultures from around the world, and unique therapeutic skills.
Refugees having arrived in the United States were facing poverty and health disparities. It is a concern that this population may lack the ability to care for themselves in order to obtain practice prevention and treatment of mental health (Grigg-Saito et al., 2010). Therefore, social workers need to be aware of the cultural barriers in order to provide services to the Cambodian refugee population for those that have been acculturated in the states.
Methods

Target Population

- There are approximately 18,000 Cambodians residing in Long Beach, California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Within this population, both the survivors of the Khmer Rouge from 1975-1979, ages 55 and over and their family members will be targeted.

Strategies for Identifying Potential Funding Source

- Sources for potential funding for the proposed project were identified using the foundation library and through Internet searches. The grant writer conducted extensive Internet searches on local, city, state, and federal funders through the following websites: www.grants.gov, www.usagovernmentgrants.org/Government_Grants.html, www.hrsa.gov/grants.htm, www.ca.gov/Grants.html, and www.calwellness.org. Literature research on similar successful projects was incorporated. Key terms such as “grants,” “grants for immigrants and refugees,” “group support,” and “mental health” were used to identify potential funding sources.

Criteria for Selection of Grant

- In order to search for the appropriate funders, the grant writer searched for funders who address the purpose of this grant program. The geographic area of the grants will be focused in Southern California since the host agency is located in Long Beach. Funding must be sufficient to meet the needs of the program for the proposed period. The grant writer examined websites that specifically award grants that serve the refugee population. The grant writer used websites to identify the funders’ background, mission, applicant eligibility criteria, previously approved grants, and deadlines.

- The goal of the program was to serve the aging Cambodian population, which struggles with mental health issues in their lives. The location, population of interest, types of service, and schedule of application were all considered in the areas of mental health, group support, and healthcare access. Consequently, this grant writer selected the Weingart Foundation as the potential funder.
Methods (cont’d)

Description of Funding Source

- The Weingart Foundation (n.d.) was established in 1951 to provide grants and support aimed at improving the service areas of health, human services, and education. The grant addressed the needs of older adults and people who are disadvantaged or underserved within the community. The foundation has supported Southern California counties and has granted more than $950 million for social services, education, and community programs. The foundation is projected to fund $35 million in services in 2015. The foundation provides grants ranging from a low of $25,000 to a high of $1 million.

Resources for the Grant Problem Statement

- There are still a number of Khmer Rouge survivors in the Long Beach area who have mental health conditions and experience barriers to accessing needed care (Berthold et al., 2014). Many of them silently suffer from the effects of past traumatic events (Chan, 2004). Cambodians are among the highest population within Southeast Asian groups to be diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Marshall et al., 2006; Wagner, Burke, et al., 2013). Other mental health disorders, such as depression, were also developed overtime due to the stresses of immigration and resettlement in the United States (Dubus, 2014). Effective utilization of available mental health services have historically proven to be challenging for many Cambodians due to the stigma attached to mental health services and language barrier. For example, according to one study Wong et al. (2005), 66% of Cambodian immigrants are challenged to overcome the language barriers; Cambodian refugees state that the language barrier became an obstacle to accessing mental health services.

Projected budget Range and Categories

- The project budget requires $50,000 to facilitate three psychoeducational workshops, including a recruitment process over a six-month period. This total budget covers both personnel and non-personnel expenses. One bilingual Khmer/English speaking full-time social worker will be hired with the salary of $20,000 with health benefits included.
The purpose of the project was to develop a culturally sensitive psychoeducation program for Khmer Rouge survivors and their families in Long Beach, California. The program aims to educate participants about the psychological effects of their traumatic experiences, promote social bonds by highlighting commonalities among participants, and develop a sense of belonging that emerges in the group experience. By addressing the mental health concerns through the educating the participants in the program, the participants will gain a better understanding and increased awareness of how to cope with mental health challenges.

This program seeks to improve the mental health for Khmer speaking Cambodian survivors that are at risk or suffering from mental health problems. Those who were directly or have been affected with mental health challenges of adjustment and survivors will be eligible to receive services. The program will be open to the Cambodian community to voluntarily share their ongoing challenges of survival, displacement, immigration, and adjustment to Western culture with the groups and/or their families.
Grant Proposal (cont’d)

Program Objectives

- Objective 1: Offer a safe culturally relevant and sensitive environment in which participants are able to share their experiences as survivors of the Khmer Rouge war.
- Objective 2: After receiving psychoeducation, 70% of participants will report they have gained a better understanding of their well-being measured by pre- and post-tests. The facilitator will present culturally appropriate interventions (e.g., addressing mental distress as a stigma, encouraging group interaction) and exhibit culturally appropriate attitudes to display trust and respect. The participants will learn coping skills and self-care techniques and develop a sense of belonging.
- Objective 3: Develop an understanding of the unnecessary stigma connected to mental health issues and services. The facilitator will use positive reinforcement and encourage the participants to discuss and explore the impact of mental health symptoms resulting from traumatic events during the Khmer Rouge war. The participants will learn to identify the various mental health signs and symptoms to promote the recovery process, and their knowledge will be measured using pre- and post-tests.
- Objective 4: Develop support systems and learn about available resources.

Program Evaluation

- The social worker will be providing a pre-test during the intake and upon completion of the psychoeducation program, participants complete a post-test. The social worker will conduct the termination survey after each workshop end.
Lessons Learned

Through the process of writing the grant, this writer became aware of the need of mental health services in the community through the literature review, writing the objectives, and the budget planning. The project required a comprehensive understanding of the Khmer Rouge war, the history of Cambodia, and the events that ultimately led to the many survivors who face mental health challenges and lack adequate services. The literature review was an enduring and long process, but researching the articles was critical to gathering information on the addressing the presented problem in the needs assessment. The researcher has learned the cultural sensitive approach in researching the history, meaning, traditions, and value of Cambodia. The extensive literature review also provided important insight into how Cambodian refugees were affected by the acculturation process and the specific challenges they faced, such as language barriers, job searching, and the acculturation process (Wong et al., 2006).

Social Work Implications

The social work professional code of ethics requires the researcher to empower and understand importance of the human relationship, advocate, and respect the human dignity of the population (NASW, 2008). The process of grant writing is a fundamental part of the social work profession. Grant writing provides opportunities to develop fruition programs that are on the cutting edge of research and practice.
REFERENCES


