EMPOWERING AFRICAN AMERICAN
YOUTH WHO LIVE IN FOSTER CARE:
A GRANT PROPOSAL

LaTasha Irene Jackson
California State University, Long Beach
May 2017
INTRODUCTION

• Overrepresentation of African Americans in the foster care system is an important social problem that needs to be addressed. During the Fiscal Year of 2014-2015, more than 415,129 children and youth nationwide were considered to be in the foster care system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2015).

• 24% of those children and youth were African Americans (USDHHS, 2015), even though African Americans comprise only 13.3% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

• In California, the number of children and youth living in foster care was approximately 63,000 in 2009 (Danielson & Lee, 2010). African American children and youth were more than 5 times as likely as white children and youth to be in California’s foster care system in 2009 (Danielson & Lee, 2010).

• Foster care youth often experience several different foster care placements including group homes and frequent relational and social network disruptions (Blakeslee, 2012; Stott, 2012).

• Previous research has documented that youth who transitioned out of the foster care system experience a host of negative outcomes including high rates of substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy and academic failure (Stott, 2012). Also, these youth experience high rates of homelessness (Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013), unemployment, public assistance dependency (Byrne et al., 2014), and involvement in the criminal justice system (Lee, Courtney, & Tajima, 2014).

Goals of the Project

• The purpose of this project was to write a grant proposal to develop and secure funding for a mentoring program for African American youth between the ages of 13 to 18. The goal of the project is to implement a program that introduces African American youth to positive adult role models with the intent to secure a lasting relationship as the youth transitions into adulthood. Another goal of the program is to provide the youth with the tools to explore self-development.
SOCIAL WORK RELEVANCE

- The proposed project will contribute to the knowledge base of social work professionals by developing a culturally sensitive and evidence-based mentoring program for African American foster youth.

- The primary mission of the social work profession is “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (National Association of Social Workers, 2017, n.p.)

- Youth transitioning out of foster care are among the most vulnerable in society. It is the ethical duty of social workers to promote social change with and on behalf of this vulnerable population.
The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) predicts that by 2042 more than half of the nation's population (54%) will be comprised of those who identify themselves as African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or multiracial (Williams, Nichols, & Williams, 2013).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011) reports from 2008 to 2011, there was an increase in services provided to children and families of minority populations, and a decrease in services provided to children and families from non-minority populations (Williams, et al., 2013).

These demographic trends are likely to be indicative of the coloring of our nation, and the coloring of child welfare clients. Child welfare workers need to be prepared and feel prepared to provide services to clients from a multicultural approach (Williams, et al., 2013).
METHODS

• The target population is African American foster youth

• The grant writer used a variety of sources for identifying and selecting potential funding sources. The Internet and the resources available at the Granstmanship Center (https://www.tgci.com) and Grants.gov (www.grants.gov).

• A variety of key terms were used to seek grants to fund the proposed mentoring program. Some specific search terms included: “grants,” “African American foster youth,” and “mentoring programs.”

• The Weingart Foundation (www.weingartfnd.org) was selected as the potential funder for this program

• The Weingart Foundation provides grants in the areas of health, human services, and education. This foundation focuses on underserved and vulnerable communities.

• The budget for this project is $112,720.
The proposed program is developed to promote the well-being of African American female youth who are living in foster care. This program will use a mentor program to provide support to African American female youth who are living in foster care.

The population served is African American female foster youth.

There will be two licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) to oversee the program and two MSW interns working closely under the LCSWs. Additionally, 18-20 volunteer mentors will be hired.

The participants will meet twice a week at Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems Group Home in Los Angeles on Mondays and Fridays from 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM. Mentees and mentors will interact on a daily basis.
• All groups are two hours in length, the first hour will be an activity or guest speaker and the second hour will be a discussion. Groups will be topical in nature. Topics will cover African American history, psychological well-being (e.g., addiction, how to access mental health services), physical well-being (e.g., hygiene, safe sex), financial well-being (e.g., career and educational options, money management) and social well-being (e.g., healthy relationships, communication skills, conflict resolution). Additionally, once a month mentors and mentees will meet on a Saturday for a “Fun Day.”

• **Objective 1: To promote the well-being of African American foster youth.** The program will use mentor activities and psychosocial support to enhance the well-being of foster youth. Youth will receive individual, group and peer support.
  1. Mentees will report an increase in their well-being
  2. Mentees will increase their knowledge of available career and educational options
  3. Mentees will report an increase in their sense of optimism about the future

• The grant writer will use self-administered surveys to collect pre-test and post-test data. Survey instruments will contain standardized instruments that measure well-being. For example, the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem (RSE) scale will be used as one measure of well-being. Focus groups will also be conducted of each key constituency group.
LESSONS LEARNED/IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

• Upon exploring the needs of African American foster youth, it was evident that this population faced significant disparities within the child welfare system.

• Since research suggested the positive benefits of mentoring for youth, the grant writer specifically decided to focus programming on African American girls in foster care due to the need for more services for this underserved population.

• Grant writing is an essential tool for the social work profession. Having the knowledge and ability to properly develop a grant proposal is an invaluable skill.
REFERENCES


• Lee, J. S., Courtney, M. E., & Tajima, E. (2014). Extended foster care support during the transition to adulthood: Effect on the risk of arrest. Children and Youth Services Review, 42, 34-42. DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.03.018


