Melodies of Intervention: Music Therapy for Transitional-Age Youth: A Grant Proposal

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May 2017
Introduction

- Up to 80% of children and youth in the U.S. foster care system have serious mental health problems (Harpin, Kenyon, Kools, Bearinger, & Ireland, 2013.)
- More than 20,000 youth exit the foster care system due to emancipation without being reunited with their parents or adopted (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).
- A substantial portion of transitional-age youth (TAY) have little or no support and continue to experience high rates of mental health problems during and beyond the transitional period (Mandarino, 2014; Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010; Zlotnick, Tam, & Soman, 2012).
- Former foster youth also experience significantly higher rates of educational failure, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, poor physical health, unplanned pregnancy and parenting, and use of public assistance as young adults, compared to those in the general population (Courtney et al., 2007; Courtney et al., 2011).
- Previous research indicates that in addition to more traditional interventions such as support groups, counseling, and medications, music therapy can serve as an effective intervention, improving mental health and well-being in youth (Carr et al., 2012; Kamioka et al., 2014; McFerran, 2011; Sharma & Jagdev, 2012; Snow & D’Amico, 2010).

- The overarching goal of the project was to write a grant proposal to develop and secure funding for a music therapy program for TAY at Boys & Girls Club of Long Beach (BGCLB) in California.
- The purpose of the proposed program is to provide music therapy to TAY who struggle with mental health problems to improve their mental health and well-being and help improve their chances of success in life.
The NASW *Code of Ethics* states that 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, 2016, “Preamble”). According to Valdez, Lim, and Parker (2015), “in the face of difficult histories and ongoing mental health challenges, youth in transition from foster care to adulthood are a particularly vulnerable population, given their abrupt transition from dependency to the responsibility of self-sufficiency” (p. 81). Therefore, developing skills in grant writing for a program that is designed to improve the well-being and lives of TAY is consistent with the social work mission. This thesis that includes a literature review on the issues relevant to the TAY population and evidence-based music interventions will contribute to the knowledge base of social work professions by providing social workers the knowledge and skills to be a competent social worker capable of advanced practice with diverse and vulnerable populations.
Children and adolescents of every race, ethnicity, and culture are represented in the U.S. foster care system (National Foster Care Coalition, n.d.). However, it is well documented that children of racial and ethnic minorities, especially African American and Native American children are disproportionately overrepresented in the system (Harris, Jackson, O’Brien, & Pecora, 2010). According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (2011), in 2008, African American children made up 14% of the country’s child population but represented 31% of children in foster care, and Native American children made up 1% of the country’s child population, yet they represented 2% of children in foster care. As the National Association of Social Workers (NASW; 2016) indicates, it is critical that social workers gain knowledge about the nature of social diversity and oppression for different social groups in order to design and provide effective interventions that include culturally relevant components. The proposed music therapy program is sensitive to cultural diversity and the needs of each TAY.
a. Target population
The target population of this grant project is TAY ages 15 to 18 who struggle with mental health problems living in Long Beach, California.

b. Strategies used to identify and select a funding source
1. Seeking advice from the grant writer’s thesis advisor as to which website and/or foundations she should look into.
2. Using the Grantsmanship Center website, which includes information on the top giving foundations that are located in California (http://www.tgci.com/ funding-sources/CA/top).
3. Using the Internet search engine Google with key words such as “grants for transitional-age youth” and “grants for music therapy.”
4. Specifically looking into the following three foundations suggested by her thesis advisor: the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), the Weingart Foundation, and the California Community Foundation (CCF).
5. Using the criteria that included the area of interest and the mission, values, and/or visions stated by the foundation, available funding, and geographic area of grant focus.
c. Identify the funding source selected
   California Community Foundation (CCF)

d. Sources used for the needs assessment
   * Director of Operations at BGCLB.
   * Peer-reviewed articles published in recent years in scholarly journals such as *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, *Child Welfare*, and *Children and Youth Service Review*.
   * Internet website sources such as government documents (e.g., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway, and youth.gov) and reputable organizations (e.g., American Music Therapy Association).

e. Projected budget range and categories
   * Total salaries with benefits (for a music therapist and MSW intern stipend = $42,000; for program director = $75,400 in-kind); Total direct program costs (for Apple Mac computer, electric guitars, bass guitars, supplies, and refreshments = $4,300; for rent and utilities, microphones and other music instruments = $11,000 in-kind); Indirect program cost = $4,630.
   * Total in-kind support - $86,400; Total program cost - $137,330.
   * Total amount requested of funder - $50,930.
a. Program summary and description

- Melodies of Intervention will be held once a week for 12 weeks. Each 12-week cohort will consist of five to six TAY and will start over with new participants after a 2-week break.
- Melodies of Intervention is informed by existing music therapy programs that have been shown effective (e.g., Hillier, Greher, Poto, & Dougherty, 2012); however, they have been modified to better meet the needs of TAY with mental health problems. Participants will engage in a variety of hands-on music making activities such as listening to different types of music and playing with various musical instruments including guitars, drums, and keyboards. In this program, participants will work toward a group project where they compose music. Based on Hillier et al.’s (2011) work and considering the age of the participants, Melodies of Intervention will incorporate technology, Apple Mac computers, and music production software GarageBand to provide music making opportunities that are fun and interesting for TAY. These activities will provide participants with the opportunities to be exposed to different music instruments and successfully play them, be creative and engage in self-expression through music, and build self-confidence. Through these activities, the participants will also learn to compromise and work collaboratively and successfully in groups while under time pressure.

b. Population served

1. TAY ages 15-18; 2. having a mental disorder; 3. expressing a desire to participate in a music program.
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c. Sustainability
* The program can continue on into the second year with lower funding because there is no need to buy Apple Mac computer and music instruments
* Generate income through a fee-for-service/a donation in addition to new grants
d. Program objectives
1. 90% of participants will demonstrate a significant improvement in self-esteem.
2. 90% of participants will demonstrate a significant reduction in self-reported anxiety.
3. 90% of participants will demonstrate a significant improvement in their attitudes toward and relationships with peers.
e. Program evaluation
To measure the outcomes of the objectives, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1989), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushne, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), and the Index of Peer Relations (Hudson, 1982), respectively, will be completed before and after the program by the participants. In addition, participants will be asked to fill out an evaluation survey to indicate their levels of satisfaction with the program as well as their feedback on how the program can be improved.
Lessons Learned/Implications for Social Work

* Grant writing is a time-consuming process. The grant writer learned that to make the process more time efficient, it is important to seek advice from her thesis advisor and develop and use criteria when evaluating potential funding sources.

* The grant writer learned that to increase the likelihood of funding, it is important to conduct a thorough literature review and write a strong statement of need, as well as establishing a cooperative relationship with the host agency to receive necessary information in a timely manner.

* Social workers should be interested in the proposed program because TAY are among the most vulnerable in society (Valdez et al., 2015). It is social workers’ ethical duties to help them, and the proposed program is evidence-based and the outcomes are promising.

* The outcomes of the proposed program will further contribute to the knowledge base of the social work profession by informing other social workers about techniques and strategies to develop and carry out best practices aimed to improve the mental health and well-being of TAY.

* The knowledge gained from the program can also be used to advocate for policies that are designed to enhance mental health outcomes and other life outcomes of TAY.