Group Mentoring Program to Empower Transitional-Aged Youth: A Grant Proposal

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Introduction

In 2014, an estimated 22,392 youth transitioned out of the U.S. foster care system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2015).

Many transitional-age youth (TAY) leaving foster care lack the supportive network, as well as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are needed to help them transition into adulthood successfully (Henig, 2009).

Although the independent living programs were established in 1999 to help them prepare for independent living, little is known about their effectiveness in improving the outcomes of TAY (Curry & Abrams, 2015).

TAY continues to experience negative outcomes in the areas of education, employment and income, housing, and criminal justice involvement (Courtney et al., 2011; Curry & Abrams, 2015).

The overarching goals of this thesis project was to write a grant proposal to develop a group mentoring program for TAY ages 16 to 18 and obtain funding for the program.

The purpose of the program is to provide TAY with support and guidance and increase their independent living skills in the areas of education, employment, and finances.
The Preamble to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics states, “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” (2016, para. 1).

The TAY population is among the most vulnerable in our society, and the proposed program, which provides TAY with support and guidance and increase their independent living skills in the areas of education, employment, and finances, is consistent with the mission of social work profession.
The foster care youth are diverse in regards to age, gender, race and ethnicity, age at entry, time in care, and placement settings (USDHHS, 2015).

In 2014, in Los Angeles County, where the majority of children are children of color, only 10% were White, 29% were African American, 59% were Hispanic, 1.5% were Asian, and 0.3% were American Indian/Alaska Native (Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, 2016).

A 2014 report by UCLA’s Williams Institute indicated that 19.1% of foster youth in Los Angeles identified as LGBTQ, and the majority of youth within the LGBTQ foster youth group were youth of color (Wilson, Cooper, Kastanis, & Nezhad, 2014).

With this diversity in the foster care system, it is important that social workers develop cross-cultural knowledge and skills and provide services that are inclusive of and empowering to various cultural groups, especially those that are traditionally marginalized and oppressed (NASW, 2015).
Methods (1)

a. Target Population: TAY ages 16 to 18 who are considered at risk (i.e., exhibiting high-risk behaviors and having a high possibility of failing academically and having negative outcomes.

b. Strategies Used to Identify and Select a Funding Source:
   - The grant writer first used the following strategies to locate about a dozen potential funders: (1) looking into a founding source based on her thesis advisor’s suggestion; (2) searching relevant categories on Fundsnet Services.com; and (3) using Google with key terms.
   - The grant writer then used the following criteria: (1) mission statement of the foundation; (2) geographical focus; (3) available funding; (4) types of programs supported.

c. The Funding Source Selected: Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (RMPF).
d. Sources Used for the Needs Assessment:
- Peer-reviewed articles.
- Websites of organizations and government agencies (e.g., California Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, and USDHHS).

e. Project Budget Range and Categories:
- Total amount requested of the RMPF: $163,900.00.
- Total program costs: $179,900.00.
- Budget categories: Staffing costs ($138,000.00 total), Direct program costs ($11,000.00 [requested] and $16,000.00 [in-kind]), and Indirect program costs ($14,900.00).
Grant Proposal (1)

a. Program Summary and Description:
- The host agency is Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC), located in Los Angeles, California.
- The program includes weekly, 2-hour group mentoring sessions held at the WLCAC on Saturdays.
- Each session explores participants’ interests and provide support and guidance to increase their independent living skills.
- The topics covered in those meetings include college education, employment assistance, and financial competence.
- The participants also receive guest speakers and experience various activities such as job shadowing and trip to college campuses.

b. Population Served: TAY ages 16 to 18. They will be recruited through existing programs at the WLCAC as well as the Los Angeles Department of Children and Families Services.

c. Sustainability: To ensure that the program continues to function, the following will be done: (1) continuing to apply for grants (government and foundations; (2) holding fundraising events (gifts and donations); and (3) using crowdfunding sites.
d. Program Objectives:

**Goal 1:** Increase motivation, skills, and knowledge needed to pursue a college degree among TAY.

- **Objective 2:** Provide TAY with information about college education costs and the availability of financial aid and scholarships.
- **Objective 3:** Provide TAY with information about academic requirements and the availability of community tutoring services.

**Goal 2:** Increase motivation, skills, and knowledge needed to obtain a job and pursue a career among TAY.

- **Objective 1:** Provide TAY with information about jobs and careers including the education and training needed to get a job and pursue a career.
- **Objective 2:** Provide TAY with information about job search, resume writing, and interview.

**Goal 3:** Increase motivation, skills, and knowledge needed to achieve financial independence and security.

- **Objective 1:** Provide TAY with information about financial management including managing bank accounts and credit cards.
- **Objective 2:** Provide TAY with information about educational attainment and income levels.

e. Program Evaluation: (1) pre- and post-test survey to evaluate the impact of the program on the knowledge gained; and (2) satisfaction survey
Lessons Learned and Implications for Social Work

a. Lessons Learned: (1) Having clear criteria is necessary to evaluate potential funding sources in a time-efficient manner; (2) Websites such as Fundsnet Services that provide hundreds of links to potential funders are extremely helpful; (3) Conducting a thorough literature review is necessary for the success of grant writing; (4) Writing an effective application is necessary to improve the likelihood of funding; and (5) having a helpful contact person from the host agency is necessary to receive information that is not available on the agency’s website.

b. Implications for Social Work: (1) Research on the effectiveness of group mentoring on the TAY population is virtually nonexistent; therefore, the positive outcomes of this program would contribute to the knowledge base of the social work profession by illustrating ways to implement evidence-based practices designed to meet the needs of TAY; and (2) if this program is proven successful, social workers would be better able to advocate for policies that would help implement this program at various agencies that work with foster youth, especially the TAY population, across the country.
References


