

## ABSTRACT

### A FAMILY VISITATION PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: A GRANT PROPOSAL

By

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The purpose of this grant project was to design a family visitation program, identify potential funding sources, and write a grant application for the agency Friends of the Family (FOF) located in North Hills, California. This grant project provides a review of the literature on the risk factors that impact reunification rates among children and families; it also examines the importance of visitation and the effectiveness of visitation programs. The program, Reach out and Reunify (ROAR), is designed to increase visitation rates among families who receive family reunification services at Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). ROAR will also serve underserved areas of San Fernando and Panorama City. The Stuart Foundation was selected to fund the visitation program to increase family reunification rates among children and families in the foster care system. Actual submission and/or funding of the grant was not a requirement for completion of this project. Implications for social work practice are discussed.



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WELFARE SYSTEM: A GRANT PROPOSAL

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“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

Philippians 4:13

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Reunification Risk Factors.....	2
Effective Visitation Programs.....	4
Purpose of the Project.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Agency Description and Contribution.....	6
Multicultural Relevance.....	7
Social Work Relevance.....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Poverty.....	10
Substance Use.....	13
Domestic Violence.....	15
Racial and Ethnic Differences.....	16
Effective Visitation Programs.....	21
Summary.....	26
3. METHODS.....	27
Identification of Potential Funding Sources.....	27
The Weingart Foundation.....	27
Parsons Foundation.....	28
The California Community Foundation.....	29
The Pfaffinger Foundation.....	29
The Stuart Foundation.....	30
Target Population.....	31
Grant Needs Assessment and Data Collection.....	31

CHAPTER	Page
4. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE .....	32
Problem Statement .....	32
Planned Program .....	33
Research Method/Evaluation .....	35
Communication .....	35
Staff Positions .....	35
Timeline .....	36
Budget Section .....	40
Budget Narrative .....	40
5. LESSONS LEARNED.....	42
Identification of the Funding Source .....	42
Grant Writing Process.....	43
Strategies to Increase Likelihood of Funding .....	43
Social Work Implications .....	44
APPENDIX: PROGRAM LINE-ITEM BUDGET .....	45
REFERENCES .....	47

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. Line-Item Budget.....	46



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau; 2011), the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicated that during the year of 2012, it was estimated that Child Protective Services (CPS) received 3.4 million referrals nationwide; 2.1 million of these reports received a CPS response. As a result of the investigations conducted, 17.7% of those referrals had substantiated allegations of child abuse and neglect. A total of 146,000 children entered foster care in the United States (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011). In December of 2013, an estimated 9,150,549 children under 18 resided in the state of California. According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP; Needell et al., 2015), there were 83,602 substantiated allegations of child abuse and neglect; as a result of these substantiated allegations, 55,064 children entered foster care in the state of California.

Research studies reveal that reunification is not occurring in a timely manner. One study that focused on state performance in regards to federal child welfare outcomes, revealed that the average percentage of children who reunified with their parents within 12 months was less than 43%, the percentage of children who reunified with their parents after 2 years was approximately 60%, and fewer reunifications occurred for children

placed in foster care longer than 2 years (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2010).

According to a recent AFCARS report that provided federal annual data on the number of children in foster care, it was reported that out of 254,162 children who entered foster care, 251,254 children left or exited foster care, and 51% of these children reunified with a foster parent or a primary caretaker (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011).

### Reunification Risk Factors

According to researchers, there is a strong correlation between the following risk factors that contribute to lower reunification rates among children and families: neglect, poverty, low socioeconomic status (SES), substance use, domestic violence, and racial and ethnic differences (Marcenko, Hook, Romich, & Lee 2012; Mirick, 2014). These risk factors continue to create reunification barriers for children and families that are involved within the child welfare system. Researchers have explained that children who are placed in the child welfare system due to allegations of neglect, are less likely to reunify with their families. It has been documented in current research studies that neglected children eventually lose contact with their families over a period of time; families are no longer able to maintain family ties and sustain successful reunification (Barber & Delfabbro, 2009; Bundy-Fazioli, Winokur, & DeLong-Hamilton, 2009).

In addition, poverty and low socioeconomic risk factors impact children and families that are involved with CPS. Children who reside in poverty stricken areas are associated with families that are economically disadvantaged. Research studies have observed that children and families who reside in underserved communities are more likely to be referred to CPS based on their demographic locations; these factors

contribute to low reunification rates (Esposito et al., 2014; Marcenko, Lyons, & Courtney, 2011).

Another dominant factor that has affected reunification rates among children and families is substance use. According to researchers, parents who use alcohol and other drugs (AOD) are more likely to experience termination of parental rights (TPR; Meyer, McWey, McKendrick, & Henderson, 2010). It was also noted that the type of treatment program and duration of treatment services also impacts reunification rates (Huang & Ryan, 2011).

Domestic violence has resulted in lower reunification rates due to the exposure of domestic violence occurring in the home. According to a recent study conducted by Renner (2011), many parents are not willing to accept the fact that partner abuse exists in their relationships, as a result, they decline to accept services from the child welfare system. A refusal of services and parent's denial contributes to the risk factors that result in low reunification rates, as the children of these families are never returned home (Renner, 2011).

Racial and ethnic differences have also been identified as patterns that contribute to lower reunification rates among children and families. Many children and families experience a difference in services and a longer time of involvement with the child welfare system based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds (Harris & Courtney, 2003). Many of these experiences have been associated with the following ethnic and racial backgrounds: Latinos, African Americans, Caucasians, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and multiethnicities (Font, Berger, & Slack, 2012; Harris & Courtney, 2003).

## Effective Visitation Programs

Reunification is more likely to happen when children have consistent and regular visitation with their family (Lopez, Del Valle, Montserrat, & Bravos, 2013). The USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau (2011) conducted a study with a sample of 922 children ages 12 and younger. The study revealed that children who received visitation with their mothers were 10 times more likely to be reunified than children who received no visitation (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011). The study also concluded that visitation improves parenting skills and parent-child interactions (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011). According to researchers, maintaining family contact reduces trauma for children who have been removed from their home, visitation also improves the child's adjustment in out-of-home placement and helps to accelerate the process of establishing a stable environment in which reunification can take place (Pulido, Forrester, & Lacina, 2011).

Research reveals that parental visitation predicts the likelihood of reunification, critical in reunifying families among children and parents (Leathers, 2002; Smith, Shapiro, Sperry, & Lebuffe, 2014). The Joan Sherman Program for Resilient Children (JSPRC), also referred to as the Sherman model, is a strengths-based practice utilized in supervised visitation programs. The model consist of six components: the visitation environment, strengths-based assessment, resilience meetings between workers and caregivers, stable visitation routines, activities to promote resilience, and progress check-ups. The Sherman model is used throughout the United States, and 83% of coaches who have utilized the model expressed that the program enhanced their professional skills; they also felt that children also benefit from the program. It was reported that 87% of

staff agreed that JSPRC helped to prepare families for reunification, and 84% agreed that JSPRC improved parenting skills (Smith et al., 2014).

A study conducted by Leathers (2002) examined if inclusive practice and parental involvement among parents who had children placed in foster care was closely associated with increased visitation and the likelihood of reunification. Data for this study consisted of obtaining information through telephone interviews with social workers and foster parents. Additional data were obtained by accessing case records for placement history and geographic information. This study concluded that parents who participated in inclusive practice and child activities had increased visitation versus parents who visited with their children in agency offices and had no other involvement. Visiting frequency was also found to be a significant predictor of family reunification.

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to design a family visitation program, identify potential funding sources, and complete a grant application for families who receive reunification services at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Reach Out and Reunify (ROAR) program will be implemented at the Friends of the Family (FOF) agency located in North Hills, California. The proposed program will include case management services and supervised visitation.

#### Definition of Terms

*Child abuse:* “The non-accidental commission of injuries against a person. In the case of a child, the term refers specifically to the non-accidental commission of injuries against the child by or allowed by a parent(s)/guardian(s) or other person(s). The term

also includes emotional, physical, severe physical, and sexual abuse” (DCFS, 2014, p. 15).

*Neglect*: “The failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Neglect may be: physical, medical, educational, and emotional” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013, p. 3).

*Termination of parental rights (TPR)*: “When a child is declared free from the care custody and control of his or her birth parents by court action” (DCFS, 2014, p. 4).

#### Agency Description and Contribution

ROAR will be an extended program implemented at the FOF agency located in the city of North Hills, California. FOF is a non- profit organization that was established in 1972. In their mission statement, FOF seeks to “foster strong, self-sufficient families, joyful and resilient children, and vibrant communities by providing respectful, responsive family support programs in the greater Los Angeles area” (FOF, 2015, para. 3). The proposed program will help identify families who are in the reunification process and assist them with supervised visitation services and linkages to counseling and parenting classes. The ROAR program will ensure that successful reunification will increase for children and families.

The ROAR visitation program will be beneficial for the agency and families who are served, because it will increase the capacity of the families being served by providing additional case management services in the community. Furthermore, families will have access to resources that are readily available in their community. The ROAR program will help the agency and families reach and obtain their goals.

### Multicultural Relevance

The children and families that are served by DCFS consist of a diverse population of ethnic backgrounds. The California Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS; 2014) has organized these cultural divisions statistically into the following demographics: 11.0% White, 60.1% Hispanic, 25.6% African American, 1.4% Asian Pacific Islander, 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.7% Filipino, and 0.9% Other. The ROAR program will be a culturally sensitive program that will be able to serve children and families of different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

### Social Work Relevance

Social workers are aware of many factors that impact the lives of children and families. They are able to provide resources and display cultural competence; these components contribute to the best practices for visitation programs among this population (Kieffer & Turrell, 2011). Through the visitation program, ROAR, social workers will be able to provide effective services, empowerment, and advocate for children and families; while understanding the importance of family visitation to promote the likelihood of family reunification services.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The intent of this literature review was to present and discuss the factors contributing to low reunification rates among children and families in the child welfare system. This literature review covers the most effective programs that address family reunification rates. Studies have shown the following factors contribute to lower reunification rates among children and families: neglect, poverty, substance use, domestic violence, and racial and ethnic differences in the child welfare system (Marcenko et al., 2012; Mirick, 2014).

This study focused on children removed for neglect, as compared to children removed for abuse in order to understand placement outcomes. The Statewide Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), a database of records compiled from case notes and files of social workers serving children removed in 12 counties in the state of Colorado, was used to obtain data pertaining to out-of-home placements and outcomes. Based upon data retrieved from SACWIS, the study concluded that 56.9% of children removed for abuse reunified with their parents; however, only 40.3% of children removed for neglect reunified with their parents. Children who were removed due to allegations of neglect spent more time in foster care and were less likely to reunify with their parents than were children who were removed for abuse (Bundy-Fazioli et al., 2009). Racial



distribution also proved to be a statistical factor, with the majority of those being removed for neglect being Caucasian (49.3%), followed by Hispanic at the rate of 37.1%. African American children were among the least likely to be removed, at the rate of 15.7% (Bundy-Fazioli et al., 2009).

Barber and Delfabbro (2009) conducted a similar study and compared the likelihood of family reunification outcomes between abused and neglected children in foster care. Standardized questionnaires were administered to social workers to obtain research data. This data showed that neglected children experienced a decrease in parental contact and were less likely to reunify with their parents than abused children.

Cheng (2010) performed a study to examine child welfare engagement with families, services provided for parents, and outcomes for children placed in long-term foster care. The researchers collected data from a national longitudinal data set, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW). Interviews were conducted with children, caregivers, caseworkers, and teachers. Outcomes revealed that reunification occurred for neglected children whose families engaged in services with child welfare agencies. In contrast, adoption occurred for neglected children whose families were in need of multiple services. These families had been engaged in long-term services with child welfare agencies over a longer period of time. As a result, reunification did not occur for these neglected children (Cheng, 2010).

Wade, Biehal, Farrelly, and Sinclair (2010) implemented a study comparing two groups of children who had been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect: those who were reunified and those who remained in the social services system. Both groups were studied in order to compare whether children in the study fared better overall

within the social services system, or when reunited with their families. Researchers examined the statistics from census records compiled in a local database that tracked the progress of all 3,872 children in nine counties who had been removed from their homes. These statistics describe the progress outcomes for those who had been removed from the home. Surveys and interviews were conducted with 149 of the children from this group, as well as a separate set of interviews with another nine birth parents and 11 of their children. Study findings indicated that children who had been placed in the social services system for neglect were less likely to be returned home than were those who were placed in the system for other forms of mistreatment (Wade et al., 2010).

### Poverty

Research has shown that many families who are economically disadvantaged present higher rates of referrals for CPS intervention, especially for abuse and neglect, than do those from higher income households. One research study examined the relationship between economic disadvantage and parent engagement in the child welfare system (Marcenko et al., 2012). The study consisted of interviews, surveys, and child welfare administrative data based on cases opened for out-of-home services. Outcomes revealed that economically disadvantaged caregivers experienced a lack of unmet needs; such as, housing, medical care, and financial aid. For example, when children are placed in foster care, their parents became ineligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Consequently, parent(s) who are economically disadvantaged are disengaged from the child welfare system and they invest their time in trying to obtain financial, medical, and housing assistance. Therefore, these parents experienced lower engagement with CWS (Marcenko et al., 2012). Low engagement can lead to lower

reunification rates. When parents lack resources to meet their basic needs, this affects the parents' capacity to care for their children and consequently may prevent reunification (Marcenko et al., 2012).

Another research study analyzed factors that correlated work and welfare as predictors of reunification (Kortenkamp, Geen, & Stagner, 2004). Parents who were on welfare and had children placed in foster care were chosen to participate in the California Work Pays Demonstration Project (WPDP). The data for this research consisted of county welfare administrative records, telephone surveys, county employment data, and child welfare administrative records. Parents who lost their benefits when their children stayed in care longer were less likely to reunify when compared to parents who stayed on welfare after placement (Kortenkamp et al., 2004).

A similar study examined the reunification rates among foster children who resided in poverty-stricken areas and contrasted them with rates from higher income (Esposito et al., 2014). Researchers cross-referenced child protection data regarding instances of removal from the home with demographics for these same families culled from census statistics. The data revealed that those children most often removed from the home, as shown by child protection reports, also presented family backgrounds of low-income as revealed by corresponding census data. Results revealed that children and families who experienced neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantages also experienced decreased reunification rates (Esposito et al., 2014).

Marcenko et al. (2011) examined demographic, psychological characteristics, and service needs of child welfare involved mothers. These researchers utilized a cross-sectional study with child welfare cases opened in Washington State. They conducted in-

person interviews using a pre-established questionnaire as a guide. Results showed that mothers were in need of housing, food, clothing, transportation, and employment. Specifically, at least 70% of mothers were unemployed with 48.6% reporting an income less than \$10,000. Additionally, of those interviewed, 65.7% received food stamps, 28.8% received social security disability, and 21.3% were in a public housing or a Section 8 program. Still another 12.4% received general assistance, and 30% of single mothers examined in the study received some form of cash or gift income from family and friends. According to these researchers, mothers who suffered from economic hardship, and the resulting concomitant housing instability, were found more likely to experience greater out-of-home placements and reduced opportunities for reunification (Marcenko et al., 2011).

Wulczyn, Chen, and Courtney (2011) conducted a study to assess whether the social descriptors of family composition, poverty rates, and racial background affected family reunification rates. The sample for this study consisted of children from 945 counties in 17 states who were placed in foster care in 2004. The database serving as the source of this study was created in partnership with the University of Chicago and child welfare agencies, and is termed the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive (FCDA). Through a data-sharing agreement, welfare agencies transmitted case study data to the University of Chicago, where it was compiled and housed at the University's Chapin Hall. Results indicated that counties with higher rates of single-parent households had lower reunification rates than did counties with lower numbers of single parents.

## Substance Use

Of the various causes for which children are referred to protective and welfare services, the greatest numbers of case referrals involve some form of alcohol or drug abuse (Brook, Gregoire, Hindman, McDonald, & Press, 2010). Reunification outcomes were tested among four groups of parents whose children were placed in foster care due to substance use. The information used for this examination was drawn from the Oklahoma DCFS case-study database. Reunification rates were compared among the four groups by using a survival analysis. At the end of an 18-month time-frame, the study concluded that parents who used drugs had slower reunification rates. Parents who used alcohol reunified at a rate of 60%, parents who used drugs reunified at a rate of 52%, parents who used alcohol and drugs reunified at a rate of 54%, and parents who used neither drugs nor alcohol reunified at a rate of 64% (Brook et al., 2010).

Lloyd and Akin (2014) analyzed the effects of parental substance use in regards to reunification rates for children placed in foster care. These researchers utilized a state welfare system's administrative database as the source for their analysis. A survival analysis was used to measure reunification rates. The outcomes of the study demonstrated that parents who used drugs had slower reunification rates. Parents that were grouped in the drug only category reunified at a percentage of 28%, parents that were grouped in the alcohol-only category reunified at a percentage of 39%, parents who used methamphetamines and poly-substance abuse reunified at a percentage of 27%, and parents who did not use any substances reunified at a percentage of 41%.

Researchers examined the predictors of reunification among mothers who participated in drug treatment programs (Grella, Needell, Shi, & Hser, 2009). Data were

obtained from CWS/CMS, interviews were conducted with clients, and case records were also assessed for this study. Outcomes revealed that 44% of children reunified with their parents, 25% of those children were adopted, and 10% of children remained in foster care placements. The likelihood of reunification was lessened by 60% for parents whose drug of choice was heroin (10.5% of families reunified) and other opioids in comparison to parents who used only alcohol (16.6% of families reunified; Grella et al., 2009).

Meyer et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine and compare TPR among parents who used AOD. A total of 60 cases were analyzed, 30 cases consisted of parents whose TPR remained permanently in effect, and the other 30 cases in which TPR was suspended allowing reunification to take place. The study assessed criteria from both samples in order to better understand the criteria underlying successful reunification, or the lack thereof. Results indicated parents who had substance use problems and mental health problems were likely to experience TPR. It was revealed that 72% of mothers had a substance abuse problem. In addition, 11 %, consisted of both the mothers and the fathers with substance abuse issues. All parents had their parental rights terminated (Meyer et al., 2010).

Huang and Ryan (2011) analyzed the relationship between specific treatment models and family reunification outcomes. Substance use treatment components, substance use progress reports, billing records, and child protective service case records with family reunification outcomes were examined for this study. According to the findings of the study, parents who were able to make use of post-residential community treatment programs fared a much greater chance of reunification with their children than did those who received residential treatment only. Indeed, at the end of an 18-month

follow-up period, researchers found that, of those parents who completed residential treatment alone, 10% were reunited with their children. This is in stark contrast to those parents who received post-residential support services, such as, 12-step based support groups and other interventions. Of these, 20% of parents, nearly twice as many, were ultimately able to be reunified with their children (Huang & Ryan, 2011).

### Domestic Violence

Research has shown that domestic violence negatively impacts reunification services for children who are placed in foster care (Renner, 2011). Renner (2011) conducted a study that assessed the co-occurrence, reunification goals, and referrals for services related to intimate partner violence (IPV) by foster care social workers. Survey data were collected and used for this study. The study revealed that IPV negatively affects reunification goals for various reasons, including a lack of appropriate and affordable treatment services, a denial of admission to guilt by the batterer, and the role of victims and their denial of IPV in their relationship (Renner, 2011).

A study conducted by English, Edleson, and Herrick (2005) examined the outcomes and services of domestic violence cases in the state of Washington. The study also compared domestic violence cases to cases that were serviced for reasons other than domestic violence, such as various types of abuse and neglect. The study was conducted for 1 year; the cases utilized for this study were involved with CPS. A total of 2,000 cases were reviewed. Face-to-face interviews with children and caregivers were conducted; information from the child welfare database and case records were analyzed (English et al., 2005).

The results concluded that 38% of cases opened for services were due to child abuse allegations that did not result in exposure of domestic violence, and 74% of these cases had a moderate to high child abuse risk level (English et al., 2005). In contrast, 56% of cases were opened due to allegations of domestic violence, and 81% of these cases resulted in children being removed from their parents' custody and placed in out-of-home care. The domestic violence cases also had a moderate to high child abuse risk level (English et al., 2005).

Another study, conducted by Kohl, Edleson, English, and Barth (2005), analyzed the aspect of domestic violence among CWS cases. The population used for this study consisted of 3,931 caregivers who were investigated for child abuse allegations between October 1999 and December 2000. Researchers used data from NSCAW, and face-to-face interviews were conducted with child welfare workers.

Results revealed that domestic violence existed in 55% of families, 60% of families had a history of domestic violence, and 67% of children remained in their parent's custody. Cases that resulted in active domestic violence cases resulted in children being removed from their home, 11% of these children were placed with relatives (Kohl et al., 2005). Furthermore, families that had a high risk level for domestic violence were 10 times more likely to have their children removed from the home when compared to families with lower risk levels of domestic violence (Kohl et al., 2005).

#### Racial and Ethnic Differences

Research indicates that race and ethnicity impacts reunification rates among children and families in the child welfare system (Harris & Courtney, 2003). The percentage of Latino children placed in the child welfare system in the United States has



increased. National data revealed that during the year of 2000, 36.6% of children in the foster care system were Latino, and rates increased to 43.3% in 2005. In the state of California, rates increased from 39.6% in 2000 to 48.7% in 2007 (Dettlaff, Earner, & Phillips, 2009; USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2002, 2007). One study revealed that Hispanic children are 15% more likely to be placed in foster care than Caucasian children and children of other races (Garcia, Aisenberg, & Harachi, 2012).

Researchers examined the differences between African American and Caucasian families in regards to risk factors, potential harm, and substantiated cases of maltreatment. A national sample of 1,461 child protective cases in the United States was assessed for this study. Interviews with case workers and parents were also conducted to obtain data. Results indicated African American children were more likely than Caucasian children to experience a high level of harm, and had CPS allegations substantiated in regards to child welfare case services (Font et al., 2012).

Harris and Courtney (2003) conducted a study that focused on the relationship between racial and ethnic backgrounds in regards to family composition among African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasian children. The study analyzed these aspects as they play a factor in the timing of family reunification rates. The population for this study consisted of 10% of children who resided in 57 counties in the state of California. The sample of children from this study were randomly selected. The information gathered for this study consisted of records containing out-of-home placement history that was stored in the foster care information system's database that was utilized in the state of California. The case records revealed information, such as, reasons for removal,

race/ethnicity, health conditions, and household compositions; discharged outcomes were also examined (Harris & Courtney, 2003).

The study concluded that racial and ethnic differences influenced the length of reunification based on racial and ethnic family compositions. African American children from single family households were less likely to reunify than Caucasian and Hispanic children. African American children reunified slowly and returned home at a slower rate. Caucasian and Hispanic children from single families went home faster than African American children from single-family households (Harris & Courtney, 2003).

In differences, Hispanic children from two-parent households were more likely to reunify quickly in comparison to African American and Caucasian children. Hispanic children returned home one fifth faster than African American and Caucasian children. According to Harris and Courtney (2003), Hispanic children are 1.3 times greater than Caucasian children and 1.7 times greater than African American children to reside in two-family households. Overall, under half (49%) of the children were Caucasian, 22.8% were African American, and 28.2% were Hispanic. A total of 67.6% children came from single households with single mothers, 56% came from single-father households, and 26.8% came from two-family households. In addition, a total of 36.7% of children among the three racial and ethnic groups remained in foster care, 39.7% reunified with family, and 23.7% had exited from the foster care system due to unknown reasons.

Lu and colleagues (2004) conducted a similar study to examine the relationship between demographics, race/ethnicity, and case outcomes that contribute to reunification factors. The subjects for this study consisted of children and adolescents who were placed at a residential facility as a result of suspected child abuse allegations. The

participants were between the ages of 2 and 16 years. A total of 3,963 children were used for this study. These youths were removed from their homes and were placed at a facility called Hillcrest Receiving Home located in San Diego, California.

Researchers utilized logs that included the participants' age, gender, race/ethnicity and referral reasons for CPS involvement. Six weeks after the referral process, more information was obtained to determine whether or not a case had been opened for services and the type of service that was provided. For children placed in out-of-home care, a follow-up study was conducted 17 months after the initial referral process (Lu et al., 2004).

The study revealed the following demographics: participants were placed in four groups based on age: 0–1 years of age, 2–4 years of age, 5–10 years of age, and 11–16 years of age. African American children had the highest percentage rates for male and female subjects when being compared to Caucasians, Hispanics, and Asian children (Lu et al., 2004). African American children ranked at 41.2% being male and 43.9% were females. According to Lu and associates (2004), Caucasian children ranked second, Hispanic children ranked third, and Asian children ranked fourth.

The study also concluded the following ethnic and racial outcomes in regards to reunification rates: out of 1,568 Caucasian children, 98 (62.7%) Caucasian children had cases opened for services, 516 (52.5%) Caucasian children were placed in out-of-home care, and 343 (66.5%) did not reunify with their parents (Lu et al., 2004). African American children consisted of 1,114 children. A total of 729 (65.4%) African American children who had cases open for services, 474 (65%) were placed in foster care, and 352 (74.3%) did not reunify with their parents (Lu et al., 2004). A total 1,061 Hispanic

children were participants in this study, 546 (51.5%) had cases opened for services, 270 (49.5%) were placed in out-of-home care, and 184 (68.1%) did not reunify with their parents (Lu et al., 2004). Asian/ Pacific Islander children consisted of a total of 220 children; 117 (53.2%) had cases opened for services, 61(52.1%) were placed in foster care, and 41(67.2%) children did not reunify with their parents (Lu et al., 2004). African American children ranked the highest with open cases and the highest percentage rates for non-reunification rates (Lu et al., 2004).

Carter (2010) examined the cases of urban American Indian and Alaska Native families' instances of the removal of the children from their home, after receiving CWS, in order to better understand the impact CWS may have had in decision-making. Data were collected from NSCAW. These data were utilized to generate a secondary data analysis, with a CPS sample of children who were investigated for child abuse and neglect allegations. Outcomes indicated that American Indian and Alaskan Native children were 4 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than Caucasian children, and the risk was greater if the parents of American Indian and Alaskan Native children had used drugs or had mental health problems (Carter, 2010).

Garcia et al. (2012) explored factors that may contribute to the growing number of Latino children in the child welfare system. Researchers utilized a sample population from Washington State DCFS. For this study, focus groups were formed from a sample population of DCFS workers; members of this group participated in interviews for which data for further examination were drawn. Results revealed that language barriers, a lack of cultural awareness, and a decrease in utilization of services among the Latino population affects reunification rates among Latino families. Therefore, a vast majority

of Latino families experience limited resources and case services based on cultural differences (Garcia et al., 2012).

One qualitative study examined the perspectives on the factors that contribute to racial disproportionality and disparity in Oregon State Child Welfare System. Focus groups were developed with families of color and data were collected by providing these groups with three global interview questions. Outcomes revealed many factors that may cause overrepresentation of children and families of color in the child welfare system.

Participants from this study reported that their low SES, a lack of trust from CWS workers, and being viewed in negative terms, resulted in CWS workers judging them based on their past experiences. As a result, the CWS worker had different expectations for their families. Families of color experienced a lack of family engagement with CPS (Miller et al., 2012).

#### Effective Visitation Programs

Reunification is more likely to happen when children have consistent and regular visitation with their family (Lopez et al., 2013). The USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau (2011) conducted a study with a sample of 922 children ages 12 and younger. The study revealed that children who received visitation with their mothers were 10 times more likely to be reunified than children who do not receive visitation. The study also showed that visitation improves parenting skills and parent-child interactions (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011). According to a recent family court research review, it was revealed that maintaining family contact reduces trauma for children who have been removed from their home, and improves the child's adjustment in out-of-home placement and helps to establish permanent living arrangements (Pulido et al., 2011).

Davis, Landsverk, Newton, and Ganger (1996) conducted a study to analyze parental visiting and permanency planning outcomes among foster children. The sample for this study consisted of 925 children in foster care during 1990–1991. The children were 12 years old or younger and had been removed from their parents. Case records were analyzed and reviewed for this study.

Results revealed maternal visits were the greatest predictor of family reunification among families and children. Children who received frequent visitation with their mothers were 10 times more likely to reunify with their families than children who did not receive maternal visits. As a result of these frequent and steady visits, 54% of these children were able to reunify with their parents (Davis et al., 1996).

In regards to specific ethnic and racial groups, the following reunification rates occurred among children and families as a result of maternal visitation outcomes: 90% of Hispanic children, 73% of Caucasian children, and 67% of African American children reunified with their families (Davis et al., 1996).

Lee (2011) analyzed the patterns of adult visitation during residential treatment and their relationship to permanency outcomes. Discharge and admissions summaries, placement history, and client demographics were utilized for this study. Six months after discharge, 75% of children reunified with their biological parents who received visitation and 30% of children who received visitation obtained permanency through adoption or legal guardianship (Lee, 2011).

Visitation is critical in reunifying families. Research reveals that parental visitation increases the likelihood of reunification among children and parents (Leathers,

2002; Smith et al., 2014). One visitation model that has been utilized to support family reunification is JSPRC (Smith et al., 2014).

JSPRC is a strength-based practice utilized in supervised visitation programs. The model consist of six components: the visitation environment, strengths-based assessment, resilience meetings between workers and caregivers, stable visitation routines, activities to promote resilience, and progress check-ups.

JSPRC is utilized throughout the United States, and 83% of coaches who have utilized the model expressed that the model increased their professional skills; and felt that children also benefit from the program because it promoted resilience. It was also reported that 84% of coaches felt that JSPRC improved parenting skills, and 87% stated that JSPRC helped to prepare families for reunification. In addition, 91% of coaches revealed the program's strength-based assessments identified accurate goals for children and families, and 96% were comfortable implementing the JSPRC program. Overall, JSPRC influenced parents to engage in positive interactions during visitation with their children. When implementing the JSPRC program, supervised visitation resulted in family reunification (Smith et al., 2014).

A study conducted by Leathers (2002) examined if inclusive practice and parental involvement among parents, who had children placed in foster care, is closely associated with increased visitation and the likelihood of reunification. Inclusive practices allows the birth parents to participate in visitation and provide care for their children while they are in foster care placement. The birth parents are able to provide care by attending school conferences, attending doctors appointments, and shopping for their children's clothing. Data for this study consisted of conducting telephone interviews with social

workers and foster parents, and additional data were obtained by accessing case records for placement history and geographic information. The study concluded that parents who participated in inclusive practice and child activities had increased visitation, versus parents who visited with their children in agency offices and had no other involvement. Children who had more than 13 visits within 6 months resulted in visiting frequency, which was found to be a significant predictor of family reunification.

In a recent study conducted by Kieffer and Turrell (2011), supervised visitation and safe exchange (SEV) programs were analyzed among children and families that were victims of abuse and violence. The participants in this study consisted of children and families involved in the child welfare system. The study was performed to decide on the most effective practices of SEV programs to be implemented in service programs for children and families. Data were collected from families who experienced abuse or violence, SEV programs, and referral sources. Interviews and surveys were used among this population. The study concluded that accessibility, resources, and cultural competency played a factor in best practices for SEV programs (Kieffer & Turrell, 2011).

Furthermore, these researchers suggest that visitation programs should also utilize a design that has long-term usefulness for victims, survivors, children, and offending parents in the child welfare system. Children should also be offered groups to process pre and post visits. It is suggested that the factors and issues revealed from this study must be addressed in order to have effective visitation programs (Kieffer & Turrell, 2011).

Perkins and Ansay (1998) assessed the effectiveness of supervised visitation centers utilized by children and families in the child welfare system. The participants for



this study consisted of children and families who had open cases with Florida's DCFS who participated in supervised visits at a local visitation center. Data for this study consisted of case records and visitation records.

Results revealed that families who engaged in visitation at the supervised visitation center had a greater chance to receive visits than families who did not utilize the visitation center services. In regards to families that were referred to the visitation center, 17% had no visits, 50% had one to nine visits, and 33% had 10 or more visits. In comparison to the families that did not utilize the visitation center, 71% had no visits, 14% had one to nine visits, and 14% had 10 to more visits. Overall, 697 visits were scheduled, 556 took place, and 141 visits were cancelled. In addition, 71% of families that utilized the center had their cases closed with the outcome of family reunification. Families who receive visits at supervised visitation centers exit from the child welfare system more quickly than families who do not engage in visitation. The study concludes that supervised visitation centers are effective in regards to the reunification process (Perkins & Ansay, 1998).

According to Leathers (2002), key elements for a successful visitation program should consist of using a strength-based approach, which incorporates providing resources and referrals, such as parenting and counseling (Leathers, 2002). These additional resources helps to engage children and families in positive interactions during visitation. Using a strength-based approach also promotes resilience among children, and helps to build positive relationships and attachment skills (Smith et al., 2014). Another key element consists of including birth parents into activities, such as, school conferences, and medical and dental appointments. This inclusion contributes to an

inclusive practice. Including parents in these activities increases visitation and results in less conflict between children and families (Leathers, 2002).

### Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature on the risk factors that impact reunification services among children and families. The chapter also examined the importance of visitation and the effectiveness of visitation programs. The literature demonstrates that multiple factors impact family relationships and timely reunification. Due to the many barriers experienced by children and their families during the reunification process, it is critical that effective visitation programs and case management services are utilized among this population.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Identification of Potential Funding Sources

This grant writer researched funding sources through the Internet by browsing local, state, and federal websites. The proposal was to seek funds to develop a visitation program to increase family reunification rates among children and families within the foster care system. The search was conducted by utilizing the following key words: children and family services, supervised visitation programs, monitored visitation, supervised visits, and family visitation programs. The Internet search revealed many funding sources. A search was conducted by browsing the FOF database. The search provided various organizations for possible funding sources. Five sources were selected: The Weingart Foundation, the Parsons Foundation, the California Community Foundation, the Pfafinger Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation.

#### The Weingart Foundation

The Weingart Foundation is a private nonprofit grant-making foundation that offers services to children and families from low socio economic backgrounds and poverty-stricken communities. The Weingart Foundation was established in 1951. The Foundation's focus is on several areas of interest, such as, education, health, and human services in many California counties. The Weingart Foundation has been initially identified as a potential funding source, as their mission provides for supporting the

efforts of reunification programs such as ROAR. In their mission statement, Weingart seeks to offer “constructive assistance to people in need which in practice, equates to financially supporting those nonprofit organization that deliver effective services in the areas of health, human services and education for people and communities” (Weingart Foundation, 2015, para. 1). Efforts at family reunification such as this proposed program would provide are aimed at those in need. During the past 40 years, the foundation has provided more than \$900 million in grants. Despite this magnitude of the foundation’s philanthropic dispersements, grants from Weingart are limited to \$100,000, effectively ruling the foundation out as a potential funding source (Weingart Foundation, 2015).

#### Parsons Foundation

The Parsons Foundation is a private nonprofit foundation that offers services to children and families. The Parsons Foundation was established in 1978 and primarily serves Los Angeles County. Their mission statement is an ideal fit with that of ROAR. According to their website, the Foundation focuses on social impact, civic and cultural programs, as well as health and higher education. In their mission statement, the Parsons Foundation “improves the well-being of Los Angeles County residents by investing in quality nonprofit organizations responding to people’s social, civic, and cultural, health, and educational needs” (Parsons Foundation, 2015, para. 1).

It is this commitment to meeting the social and educational needs of the community that could make Parsons an ideal fit. ROAR has been tasked with similarly meeting its service area’s educational and social needs. In particular, ROAR will provide educational and social services in the form of parenting classes and family counseling, services which, at the local level, provide perfect examples of the areas addressed by both

organizations' mission statements. However, as with the Weingart Foundation above, grants are also capped at \$100,000, eliminating Parson's as well from the list of potential donors (Parson Foundation, 2015).

#### The California Community Foundation

The California Community Foundation is a public nonprofit foundation that offers services to children and families, disadvantaged populations, and underserved communities. The California Community Foundation was established in 1915 and primarily serves Los Angeles County. The focus of this foundation is on civic engagement, disenfranchised, marginalized, or low-income communities, or communities of color. The California Community Foundation mission statement states, "Strengthening Los Angeles communities through effective philanthropy and civic engagement" (California Community Foundation, 2015, para. 1).

Over the past 100 years, the Foundation has funded more than \$16 billion in grants. A limitation for using this funding source is that the California Community Foundation seeks to create new and innovative programs. Although the ROAR program is new, such similar programs do exist (California Community Foundation, 2015).

#### The Pfaffinger Foundation

The Pfaffinger Foundation is a private nonprofit grant-making foundation that offers services to children and families, low-income youth, young adults, and women. The Pfaffinger Foundation was established in 1936 and primarily serves Los Angeles County, provides some funding sources for Orange County. The focus of this foundation is on promoting self-sufficiency among the working poor population, services for seniors, and credit counseling. Over the past 100 years, the foundation has funded more than \$16

billion in grants. A limitation for using this funding source was the foundation only funds amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 (Pfaffinger, 2015). The ROAR program is seeking \$128,220, which limits this as a source of primary funding.

#### The Stuart Foundation

The Stuart Foundation was selected to fund the visitation program to increase family reunification rates among children and families in the foster care system. The Stuart Foundation is a private, nonprofit grant-making foundation that offers services to foster youth and the economically disadvantaged. The Stuart Foundation was established in 1937 and primarily serves the state of California and Washington. The focus of the Stuart Foundation is to make a positive impact on the field of education, and to provide child protection for young people in the state of California and Washington (Stuart Foundation, 2015, para. 1).

The Stuart Foundation Mission Statement, is dedicated to the “protection, education, and development of children and youth, we work toward ensuring that all children grow up in caring families” (Stuart Foundation, 2015, para. 1). In comparison, the ROAR program will also ensure the safety of kids. In order to apply for a grant from the Stuart Foundation, the applicant must submit a letter of inquiry with detailed information on the program. This step takes approximately 60 days for the Stuart Foundation to review the letter of inquiry. After submission, the Stuart Foundation staff reviews the materials and contacts the applicant if they can apply for the grant (Stuart Foundation, 2015).

### Target Population

The target population for this proposed program will consist of children and families receiving family reunification services at the DCFS office, located in Santa Clarita. The ROAR visitation program will be located at the agency, FOF, located in North Hills, California. The agency services children and families from many different ethnic backgrounds. The agency has organized these cultural divisions statistically into the following demographics: 51% Latino, 32% Caucasian, 11% African American, 1% Asian Pacific Islander, and 5% Multiethnic. In addition to this diverse population of children and families, 16% consist of adolescents ages 13–22, 22% are children ages 0–2, and 62% are adults ages 23 and up (FOF, 2015).

### Grant Needs Assessment and Data Collection

Multiple sources were used for the needs assessment. The U.S. Census Bureau was used to obtain socioeconomic status, ethnicity of the community, and education levels. Sources were also drawn from Los Angeles County Children and Family Services Agency for child abuse rates in the community, and CWS/CMS. The Administration for Children and Families and the Department of Health and Human Services was also utilized for national information in regards to the child welfare system. In addition, data were obtained online through the Center for Social Services Research, from U.C. Berkley School of Social Welfare.

CHAPTER 4  
PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

The purpose of this project was to develop a family visitation center, identify potential funding sources, and complete a grant application for children and families who receive services at DCFS. The proposed program will be located in the city of North Hills, California.

Problem Statement

According to USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau (2011), AFCARS indicated that during the year of 2012, it was estimated that CPS received 3.4 million referrals nationwide; 2.1 million of these reports received a CPS response. As a result of the investigations conducted, 17.7% of those referrals had substantiated allegations of child abuse and neglect. A total of 146,000 children entered foster care in the United States (USDHHS ACF, Children's Bureau, 2011). According to CCWIP, there were 83,602 substantiated allegations of child abuse and neglect; as a result of these substantiated allegations, 55,064 children entered foster care in the state of California (Needell et al., 2015).

According to Los Angeles County CWS/CMS, there is a total of 4,615 cases in the San Fernando Valley areas; of these cases, 99 cases receive family reunification services. The demographics consist of 58% Hispanic, 14% Mexican, 0.9% African American, Hispanic, 0.8% African American, 0.8% Asian Pacific Islander, 0.8%



American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0% Pacific Islander (CWS/CMS, 2015). Based on the statistics listed above, there is a need for a visitation center for these families in the Los Angeles County area.

FOF and participants will benefit from the ROAR program, because as it stands now, there is a limited amount of monitors available to meet the needs for a full visitation program. The ROAR program will accommodate parents with monitors; provide linkages with needed qualified social service professionals, including parenting classes. Services will be readily available and easy to access for participants residing in the surrounding areas. The services will be with the tools needed to adequately meet court-ordered requirements for reunification, especially for those youth serviced in the areas: North Hills, San Fernando, and Panorama City.

### Planned Program

#### Program Description

ROAR is designed to increase visitation rates among families who receive services at DCFS. ROAR will be located at FOF in North Hills, and also serve the underserved areas of San Fernando and Panorama City. The program will help identify families who are in the reunification process and assist them with monitored visitation services and case management services, such as, linkages to counseling, parenting classes, and providing the participants with support groups.

ROAR will provide services to a total of 24 families. Visitation will occur once a week for 1 hour per family. In order to be eligible for the program, participants must have an open case with DCFS and are receiving family reunification services. Participants must have children between the ages of 0–17, and monitored visitation must

be included in the participant's case plan with DCFS. Families will receive linkages to parenting classes and individual counseling. Parents will also be provided with support groups at the agency. The support groups will discuss topics based on positive engagement between children and parents.

### Program Goals, Objectives, and Activities

ROAR's Primary Goal: For children and families to reunify.

Objective 1: Within 1 year, 50% of participants in the ROAR program will have completed the weekly visitation requirements as evidenced by social work intern case notes.

Objective 2: Within 1 year, 50% of participants will be able to demonstrate positive engagement with their children during visitation as evidenced by social work intern's observations during visitation sessions.

Objective 3: Within 1 year, 60% of participants will have completed parenting classes as evidenced by a certificate of completion.

Objective 4: Within 1 year, 40% of participants will have completed counseling as evidenced by social work intern's case notes.

Activity 1: Weekly visitation will be provided to the families.

Activity 2: Weekly support groups will be provided to the parents.

Activity 3: Participants will receive weekly case management services to ensure parents are getting connected to services, such as, parenting classes, counseling services, and community resources. The program will also provide transportation assistance.

### Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this program are:

1. Participants will be able to demonstrate appropriate parenting skills.
2. Children and families will experience improved family relationships through positive engagement.
3. Reunification rates will be increased among children and families through ROAR supervised visitation program.

#### Research Method/Evaluation

The methods for evaluating the ROAR program will consist of qualitative and quantitative data collection. A program evaluator will be hired to analyze data, such as, demographics, eligibility criteria, and services that the participants completed. In addition, the program evaluator will provide instruments and tools to conduct interviews with families. The data that are collected from the assessments and from the participants will be utilized and compared to determine the effectiveness of the ROAR program.

#### Communication

The program director will collaborate with various schools, churches, and public agencies to help implement the ROAR program. The program director will attend DCFS staff meetings to recruit children and families for the ROAR program. The program director will answer questions for DCFS social workers who wish to utilize the ROAR program.

#### Staff Positions

##### Program Director

The program director will be responsible for overseeing the entire program. The Program Director will have a master's degree in social work (MSW), will be licensed in the state of California (LCSW), and bilingual in English and Spanish. The director will

coordinate monthly meetings with other community agencies, provide supervision for three MSW interns, and network with other community organizations. In addition, the director will provide training to all program staff.

### Social Work Interns

There will be three MSW Interns. MSW interns will work part-time 16 hours a week, 36 weeks each year. Two interns will be required to be bilingual in English and Spanish, and the third one will be African American. MSW interns will assist the director, conduct program assessments, provide case management services, facilitate support groups, and serve as monitors for supervised visitation.

### Program Evaluator

The program evaluator will evaluate the entire program; he/she will analyze data, case records, and conduct interviews with staff and families to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

## Timeline

### Month 1

1. Hire program director.
2. Program brochures will be purchased for outreach purposes.
3. Purchase office furniture and supplies; set up office and visitation room.

### Month 2

1. Program director will network with community agencies to obtain resources.
2. Program director will conduct presentations at DCFS and with other community organizations to distribute brochures for outreach purposes.

3. Program director will meet with MSW interns once a week for supervision and training purposes.

#### Month 3

1. Program director will assign cases to MSW interns.
2. Monitored visitation and case management services will begin for participants.
3. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and other community agencies.
4. MSW interns will conduct initial assessments with participants.
5. Program director will meet with MSW interns once a week for supervision and training purposes.

#### Month 4

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

#### Month 5

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.

4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

#### Month 6

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

#### Month 7

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

#### Month 8

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

### Month 9

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

### Month 10

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.

### Month 11

1. Monitored visitation and case management services will continue for participants.
2. The director will continue to collaborate with DCFS and community agencies.
3. Weekly supervision meetings/trainings will continue between MSW interns and program director.
4. MSW interns will facilitate support groups.
5. Implement final case evaluations, to be conducted by program evaluator.
6. Participants will complete programs.

## Month 12

1. Program evaluation will take place.
2. Hire program evaluator.
3. Final outcome and data will be analyzed.
4. Develop application for future funding.

### Budget Section

Please see Appendix for program budget.

### Budget Narrative

The ROAR program will have a total budget of \$128,220 for 1 year.

### Staff

*Program Director:* The program director will be a full-time employee (100% FTE). The program director will work a total of 40 hours per week for 52 weeks. The director will receive a salary of \$65,000 a year, 2 weeks paid vacation, and benefits calculated at 25% (1 @ \$65,000 + benefits @ 25%, \$16,250 = \$81,250/yr.).

*MSW Interns:* There will be a total of three interns. Interns will work 16 hours per week for 36 weeks for 1 year. MSW interns will be paid \$15.00 per hour with no benefits (1 @ \$8,640 x 3 = \$25,920/yr.).

*Program Evaluator:* The program evaluator will be paid a total amount of \$5,000.00 for the year to evaluate the program.

### Direct Program Cost

*Office Supplies:* Office supplies will include paper, filing supplies, pens, pencils, folders, ink, staple, stapler, toner, post-its, highlighters, markers, whiteout, hole puncher,



envelopes, staple remover, letter openers, tape, glue, scissors, and other necessary office supplies (12 months x \$250/mo = \$3,000/yr.).

*Office Equipment:* Office equipment will include three desk, three lap tops, and one large printer (\$2,500/yr.).

*Office furniture:* Office furniture will include three desk, and three chairs (\$1,140/yr.).

*Telephone and Fax:* There will be two office telephones, one cell phone, and one fax machine. Landlines will include two telephone landlines, one cell phone line, and one fax line (\$2, 210/yr.).

*Copying and Printing:* This will include program brochures, business cards, materials, for the agency, and clients (\$2,000/yr.).

*Arts and Crafts:* This will include art kits, paints, art and craft paper, art supplies, Craft materials (\$1,000/yr.).

### In-Kind Services

*Utilities:* The amount needed to cover the cost of utilities for the program during hours of operation (\$3,000/yr.).

*Internet:* This will include monthly Internet service (1 @ \$100 x 12 = 1,200/yr.).

## CHAPTER 5

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### Identification of the Funding Source

An Internet search was conducted to explore possible funding sources. Multiple key words were used to locate an appropriate funding source. However, it was challenging to find a foundation to fund the ROAR program, due to various limitations in regards to funding amounts and the type of programs that certain organizations funded. Eventually, the grant writer browsed the websites of other human service agencies that provided services for children and families in underserved communities. Next, the grant writer researched these agencies' possible funding sources and their partnerships with other agencies within the community. The grant writer utilized this strategy as a possible way to obtain funding sources. Finally, the grant writer was able to obtain a list of foundations to gather information from in regards to possible funding sources.

Lastly, the grant writer browsed each individual website and was able to learn about various grant applications, procedures, and the history of many organizations. The grant writer also became familiar with many foundations based on their vision and mission statements; the process of elimination was another strategy that was utilized to be able to find a funding source that could fit the needs of the ROAR program. Numerous agencies were ruled out. After an extensive search, the grant writer was able to select the Stuart Foundation after learning about their mission statement, the amount of funding

allowed, their procedures, and limitations. The Stuart Foundation was a perfect match for the ROAR Program.

### Grant Writing Process

The most challenging aspect of the grant writing project was completing the literature review. The literature review required the grant writer to become knowledgeable about the population being studied. The review also required the grant writer to gather research in regards to the population, the risk factors that impact reunification rates, and effective visitation programs. The grant writer learned that the grant writing process takes a great deal of time management, specific details, and an in-depth study about the population and communities that are being served. It has been acknowledged that clear and expressive writing skills are beneficial when writing to obtain grants. The information that was obtained about budgeting, timelines, assessments, and evaluations contributed to a wealth of knowledge that was able to be retained. Overall, the grant writer was able to learn about the key elements that are considered to be beneficial when applying for grants. This information can be utilized in the near future.

### Strategies to Increase Likelihood of Funding

The grant writer conducted an interview with the Assistant Regional Administrator at the Santa Clarita DCFS office. The purpose of this interview was to obtain additional information in regards to the needs of the target population and DCFS staff. The grant writer also interviewed a staff member from FOF to gather more information about the needs of the population the agency serves. In addition, literature reviews about the population being served were obtained. Research gathered about the

agency and their partnership with DCFS was also analyzed. Furthermore, the program goals, objectives, and activities are clearly defined and outlined to increase the likelihood of funding strategies for the Stuart Foundation.

#### Social Work Implications

A vast majority of families lack access to resources and referrals, due to certain limitations and barriers they may face. Grant writing is beneficial for social workers to have an opportunity to create new programs that can help children and families in need. It is important for social workers to thoroughly understand the issues (poverty, IPV, substance use) many families may face that impact reunification rates among families in the child welfare system. Continuous education and training in these areas will allow social workers to provide an array of appropriate services and support for families. In addition, social workers can assist community agencies with grant writing skills specifically for children and families who reside in underserved communities and populations.

APPENDIX  
PROGRAM LINE-ITEM BUDGET

TABLE 1. Line-Item Budget

EXPENSE	Year 1
<i>Staffing Salaries and Benefits</i>	
Program Director/ FTE/100% /\$31.25/hr x 40 hrs x 52 wks	\$65,000.00
Benefits @ 25%	\$16,250.00
3 Masters of Social Work (MSW) Interns, PTE- 40%/ \$15/ hr/ 16 hrs x 36 wks	\$25,920.00
Program Evaluator	\$5,000.00
<b>TOTAL STAFF SALARIES/ BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$112,170.00</b>
<i>Direct Cost</i>	
Office Supplies	\$3,000.00
Equipment	\$2,500.00
Office Furniture	\$1,140.00
Telephone and Fax	\$2,210.00
Copying and Printing	\$2,000.00
Arts and Crafts	\$1,000.00
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COST</b>	<b>\$11,850.00</b>
<i>In-Kind Expenses</i>	
Utilities	\$3,000.00
Internet	\$1,200.00
<b>Total In-Kind Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,200.00</b>
<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>\$128,220.00</b>

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