

ABSTRACT

A RECREATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR FOSTER YOUTH WHO RESIDE IN GROUP HOMES: A GRANT PROPOSAL

By

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The purpose of this thesis project was to write a grant proposal to secure funding for a recreational and vocational program for female foster youth who reside in group homes run by Rosemary Children's Services in Pasadena, California. A literature review was conducted to examine topics related to foster youth living in group homes, including the challenges and outcomes of foster youth, protective factors, and the barriers to and benefits of recreational activities and vocational training. The goals of the proposed recreational and vocational program were to enhance educational attainment and to provide better job opportunities for this population. The Weingart Foundation was identified as a potential funder for the proposed program. The actual submission or funding of this grant proposal was not a requirement for the successful completion of the project.

A RECREATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR FOSTER YOUTH WHO
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Issue

Group homes are considered a less restricted type of residential facilities for adolescents and youth, especially for those discharged from residential treatment centers (Baker & Calderon, 2004). However, less restrictive does not necessary equate to better psychosocial functioning. Hollingsworth (2012) illustrates how youth who reside in care facilities have less educational achievement when compared to their peers who reside at home. Studies suggest that a majority of foster youth have lower educational accomplishment (Baker & Calderon, 2004; Williams, 2011). Employment is another challenge for foster youth. Foster youth have less employment opportunities (Hook & Courtney, 2010; Hudson, 2013).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this proposal was to develop a recreational and vocational program for youth who reside in group homes. The goals of the proposed recreational and vocational program are to: (1) enhance educational attainment and (2) provide better job opportunities for this population.

Conceptual Definitions

Group home: Defined as a child welfare service that provides children with 24-hour care. Each group home can have less than 25 children, serving children with

therapeutic interventions based on their needs. Group homes fall under the category of Residential Treatment Settings (RTS); however, they are less restrictive and smaller compared to RTS (Baker & Calderon, 2004).

Recreational activities: Although there is no universally accepted definition for recreational activities, it usually refers to activities people engage in during their leisure time. It excludes work-related and life preservation activities (Hurd & Anderson, 2011).

Youth/adolescents: The United Nations Population Fund (2006) defines adolescents as those who are 10-19 years old and youth as those who are 15-24 years old. For the purpose of this study, youth and adolescents are used interchangeably and refer to individuals between the ages of 11-17.

Social Work and Multicultural Relevance

A growing body of studies reveal that foster youth are at risk for various negative outcomes including mental health disorders, low self-esteem, delinquency, educational failure, and unemployment (Baker & Calderon, 2004; Hollingworth, 2012; Hudson, 2013; Macomber et al., 2008; Postlethwait, Barth, & Guo, 2010; Williams, 2011). Although studies have shown that foster youth are a vulnerable population, current programs and resources that meet these needs of this population are limited (Williams, 2011). The main goal of social workers is to help and support vulnerable people to meet their needs (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008). Since foster care youth are one of the most vulnerable populations of society, social workers should use their knowledge and skills to advocate and provide services for the at-risk youth.

Lee (2005) states that the majority of the people in the United States do not engage in regular physical activities. Moreover, ethnic and racial minority populations,

including Hispanic and African Americans, are less likely to engage in physical activities and sports compared to their White non-Hispanic peers. Two dynamics that Lee identified as preventing factors were the social and cultural norms and accessibility to physical activity within the community. According to Lee, cultural norms and lack of accessibility to community based physical activities play a big role in the participation level. Since cultural, interpersonal, social, and environmental factors affect participation in physical activities, social workers need to be familiar with these external factors (Lee, 2005). Lee also pointed out that social ecological focus is probably the best approach for ethnic and racial minority populations. Furthermore, this author recommended that social workers are in a position to conduct further and more detailed research on the relationship between culture and level of physical activities among ethnic and racial minorities in order to identify the most appropriate interventions.

According to NASW (2008), social workers have to be culturally competent. They are required to educate themselves and become aware of diversity and oppression that exist in regards to ethnicity, race, gender identity, immigration status, and many other aspects. Social workers should understand culture and how it affects all aspects of one's life. They should also be aware of how it makes people act and behave differently. Given that children who reside in group homes have diverse ethnic backgrounds, child care staff who care for them need to be culturally competent and aware of the unique needs of minority populations in order to encourage them to engage in physical activities (Lee, 2005).

In addition to increasing the level of physical activity, it is recommended that youth in group homes obtain support in achieving a higher educational level and

vocational training (Baker & Calderon, 2004). Social workers who work with youth in group homes also need to be familiar with effective educational and vocational programs such as mentorship since it is proved to have positive influence on the youth (Williams, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review includes existing literature on topics related to foster youth living in group homes. This chapter will cover the challenges and outcomes of foster youth, protective factors, and the barriers to and benefits of recreational activities and vocational training.

Challenges Faced by Youth in Group Homes

In 2010, there were approximately 408,000 children and adolescents in the foster care system in the United States, of which 25,066 or 6% were living in group home settings (Chow, Mettrick, Stephan, & Waldner, 2014). Youth in foster care, especially those living in residential facilities such as group homes, face a number of challenges. Most of these youth have experienced family dysfunction and maltreatment such as abuse and neglect (Brockett & Anderson-Nathe, 2013; Hook & Courtney, 2010). In addition to maltreatment, youth in foster care experience abrupt relational disruptions due to the separation from their families and multiple placement changes and are unable to form a healthy ongoing relationship with an adult or have a positive role model (Hook & Courtney, 2010; Macomber et al., 2008; Pecora, 2012; Williams, 2011).

Due to the traumatic experiences, these children and youth are more likely to have emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Hook & Courtney, 2010; Hudson, 2013; Williams, 2011). Youth in group homes are particularly

vulnerable to emotional and behavioral problems because many end up in group homes as the placement of last resort after having experienced many placement changes (Baker & Calderon, 2004; Chow et al., 2014). Chow et al. (2014) conducted a study to examine, among other things, the mental health diagnoses of youth living in group homes. The study included a sample of 29 group homes randomly selected from the 138 group homes in a mid-Atlantic state. From the 29 group homes, 180 eligible charts were evaluated. The researchers found that at the time of group home admission, 78% of youth were 13 years old or older, 57% were 15 years old or older, and 6% were 18 years old or older. They also found that, of the 180 charts, 55% indicated mood disorders such as depressive disorders and bipolar disorders, 39% indicated disruptive behavior disorders such as conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, and 37% indicated attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Chow et al., 2014).

Youth in group homes are also more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system than youth in other out-of-home settings (Robst, Armstrong, Dollard, & Rohrer, 2013). Robst et al. (2013) conducted a study to compare arrest rates during and after out-of-home treatment for mental health issues among youth in three Medicaid-funded out-of-home treatment settings: community-based therapeutic group homes (TGH), therapeutic foster families, and inpatient psychiatric facilities in Florida. The researchers used the Florida Medicaid claims data to identify children and youth in out-of-home mental health care from 2003 to 2007, and matched these data to the records from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement. The researchers found that youth in group homes had higher arrest rates during the treatment episode than their counterparts in inpatient group facilities or foster homes. According to the researchers,

higher arrest rates in group homes might be attributed to negative peer influences and inflexible group home policies that lead to more arrests. They concluded that for youth without a major psychiatric disorder, therapeutic foster care may be a better option than community-based group homes (Robst et al., 2013).

Although studies have shown that youth in group homes are a vulnerable population, current programs and resources that meet the needs of this population are limited (Hollingworth, 2012; Williams, 2011). In fact, according to Cox (2013), school teachers and staff are often not adequately informed about the needs of these youth and do not have collaborative relationships with child welfare agencies to effectively provide them with the support they need.

Negative Outcomes of Foster Youth

Research indicates that foster care youth are more likely to experience negative outcomes including poorer physical and mental health, lower educational achievement, higher unemployment, lower income, and higher rates of homelessness and incarceration than youth in the general population (Alliance for Children's Rights, 2014; Courtney et al., 2011; Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013; Hollingworth, 2012; Hook & Courtney, 2010; Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010; Yaroni, Wetts, & Ross, 2010).

Educational Outcomes

Studies show that educational outcomes in foster youth are poor (Cox, 2013; Courtney et al., 2011; Pecora, 2012; Unrau, Font, & Rawls, 2012). According to Cox (2013), in school, many of foster youth exhibit problems such as difficulty concentrating, inability to get along with their peers, hyperactivity, incomplete assignments, and

emotional reactions to interaction with their birth parents. These children and youth are more often tardy and absent than are their non-foster peers (Cox, 2013). As a result, according to the Alliance for Children's Rights (2014), in Los Angeles County, California, 75% of children in foster care are performing below grade level, and 80% have had to repeat a grade by third grade. In addition, by 11th grade, only 20% of foster youth is proficient in English and only 5% is proficient in math (Alliance for Children's Rights, 2014).

Unrau et al. (2012) conducted a study to compare readiness for college engagement between college freshmen who are former foster youth and the general freshman population. Both groups attended the same four-year university. The researchers found that students from foster care were less well prepared academically upon entering college. For example, former foster youth's average high school GPAs were significantly lower at 3.07 compared to 3.25 for their non-foster peers. The researchers also found that this performance gap did not close through the first semester. For example, 47% of former foster care students withdrew from one or more classes during the first semester, while only 18% of students from the general freshman population did so. Moreover, at the end of the first semester, the average GPAs for former foster care students was significantly lower at 2.34 compared to 2.85 for the general freshman population (Unrau et al., 2012).

Studies also indicate that foster youth alumni are significantly more likely to have negative educational outcomes than young adults in the general population (Courtney et al., 2011; Pecora, 2012). Courtney et al. (2011) conducted a longitudinal study, called the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (the Midwest

Study), to examine the functioning of foster youth alumni and followed a sample of 732 young people from three Midwest states (Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin) as they aged out of the system and transitioned to adulthood. Baseline interviews were conducted in 2002-2003. Four additional waves of survey were conducted in 2004, 2006-2007, 2008-2009, and 2010-2011. All of the youth in the baseline sample were 17 or 18 years old, and the fifth wave interviews were conducted when all of the participants ($n = 596$) were 25 or 26 years old. The researchers found that by age 25 or 26, only 2.5% of former care alumni had a 4-year college degree, while 23.5% of young adults in the general population had completed a 4-year college (Courtney et al., 2011).

Employment Outcomes

Academic failure and/or low academic attainment leave many foster youth poorly prepared to succeed as economically independent adults in today's competitive world (Cox, 2013; Yaroni et al., 2010). In fact, Courtney et al. (2011) also found that foster care alumni are significantly more likely to have poor economic outcomes than young adults in the general population as well. One of the findings of the Midwest Study was that only 45.8% of foster care alumni ages 25 and 26 were currently employed compared to 79.6% of young adults in the general population. In addition, of those who were employed, the median annual income for foster care alumni was significantly lower at \$8,950 compared to \$27,310 for their non-foster care counterparts. The same study also found that at the time of the interview, 1.3% of foster care alumni were homeless, compared to 0% for young adults in the general population, and 5.2% of foster care alumni were incarcerated, compared to only 0.5% for the general population (Courtney et al., 2011).

Macomber et al. (2008) also conducted a study to examine the economic outcomes of foster youth in three states: California, North Carolina, and Minnesota. The researchers found that there is a higher risk of future unemployment for foster youth. One of the findings was that 22 to 33% of foster youth residing in those states did not have reliable and steady jobs, with only 16 to 25% of this population having stable employment. When foster youth were employed, they made less money than their peers. Nationwide, the average monthly income of employed youth was approximately \$1,500, while Californian foster youth received an average of \$700. In other states, this was even lower; the average monthly income for foster youth in North California was \$450 (Macomber et al., 2008).

Research indicates that racial and ethnic differences and disparities exist in economic outcomes of foster youth. Hook and Courtney (2010) conducted a study to examine employment outcomes of former foster care youth and found that at the age of 17, African American youth have half employment rates compared to their White peers. The researchers also found that only 36% of African American men and 41% of African American women were employed at the age of 24, while over 60% of White men and women were employed at the same age. Moreover, about 40% of African American men and women had been seeking a job at the time of the study, while only 16% of White men and 12% of White women had been searching for employment at the same time. In addition, they found that 19% of African American men were unemployed due to incarceration, compared to only 12% among their White peers (Hook & Courtney, 2010).

In addition, Hook and Courtney's (2010) study found that former foster youth who resided in group homes and other residential treatment settings were 60% less likely

to be working than those who lived in traditional family foster care. The researchers also found that youth exiting from group homes were more likely to be earning smaller wages than youth exiting from family foster care. According to the researchers, the poorer outcomes for youth who lived in group homes can be attributed to the fact that these youth were less likely to have adults with connections that facilitate employment than youth who lived in traditional foster care homes. They also explain that because youth living in group homes are more likely to have personal characteristics such as emotional and behavioral problems that negatively affected their employability (Hook & Courtney, 2010).

Other Negative Outcomes

According to Yaroni et al. (2010), many of the outcomes, such as lower educational achievement, higher unemployment, lower income, higher rates of homelessness and incarceration and poorer physical and mental health, are interrelated and present cumulative difficulties. For example, Hudson and Nandy (2012) conducted a study to compare the prevalence of depressive symptoms and substance use between homeless youth and young adults with and without a history of foster care placement. Participants were 156 homeless youth and young adults ages 16 to 25. Of the 156 participants, 44 had a history of foster care placement. The researchers found that homeless youth and young adults with a history of foster care placement were more likely to have depressive symptoms at 21% compared to their counterparts at 17.5%. The researchers also found that youth and young adults with a history of foster care placement are significantly more likely to report methamphetamine use at 60% compared to their non-foster care counterparts at 33%. They also found that a significantly higher

proportion of foster youth and alumni reported heroin use at 43% compared to their non-foster care counterparts at 27% (Hudson & Nandy, 2012).

Dworsky et al. (2013) conducted a study to examine the incidence of homelessness during the transition from foster care to adulthood. The researchers used data from the Midwest Study and found that between 31% and 46% of their study participants had been homeless at least once by the time they are 26 years old. The researchers also found a history of running away while in foster care and greater frequency in placement changes, both of which indicating instability, predicted homelessness. According to the researchers, this instability may limit youth's ability to access community-based programs that could provide them with assistance for securing housing. The researchers also found that being male, having a history of physical abuse, exhibiting delinquent behaviors, and having symptoms of mental health disorders were associated with increased likelihood of becoming homelessness among foster care alumni (Dworsky et al., 2013).

Protective Factors

Due to these negative outcomes that foster youth can face, it is important to identify protective factors that can mitigate or eliminate the effects of their challenges and negative experiences. According to Harpin, Kenyon, Kools, Bearinger, and Ireland (2013), four constructs are often used to measure protective factors in resiliency research with youth: parental caring, other adult caring, school connectedness, and grade point average (GPA). When Harpin et al. (2013) conducted a study to compare protective factors against mental health distress between foster care youth and youth in the general population, they used these four constructs. Parenting caring was assessed with a

question, “How much do you feel your parents care about you?” To assess other adult caring, participants were asked how much other adults such as teachers, spiritual leaders, and relatives cared about them. To measure school connectedness, participants were asked school-related questions, such as “Are other students in your school friendly?” and “Do teachers show respect for students?” (Harpin et al., 2013, p. 113). Consistent with previous studies, the findings indicated that foster care youth reported higher levels of mental health distress than their non-foster peers. The researchers also found that compared to youth in the general population, foster youth reported lower levels of parental caring, other adult caring, school connectedness, and GPA, all of which are considered key to resilience in youth. The researchers emphasized the importance of providing programs designed to promote resiliency protective factors for this vulnerable population (Harpin et al., 2013).

According to Hook and Courtney (2010), although foster alumni are less likely to be employed and earn lower wages than their non-foster peers, there is variability in the employment outcomes of foster alumni. They identified three effective factors that play important roles in determining the outcomes: (a) human capital, (b) social capital, and (c) personal capital. Human capital refers to the level of education and skillfulness. Higher educational attainment is associated with the likelihood of employment and higher wages. Social capital refers to the relationships that foster youth have with influential people in their lives. Examples of social capital include a close relationship with an adult who could help them find a job or access to a social network that could provide youth with information about job openings. Personal capital refers to the behavioral characteristics

that affect youth's attitudes and motivation to work. Examples of personal capital include having or not having mental health issues (Hook & Courtney, 2010).

Barriers to and Benefits of Recreational Activities

Barriers

Youth need to participate in recreational activities in order to develop physical, mental, and social health (Kemperman & Timmermans, 2011; Young et al., 2014). However, Americans' physical activity level is reported to be much lower than the amount recommended by the U.S. government. Research indicates that 53-95% of adults and 50-90% of adolescents do not sufficiently participate in physical activities (Young et al. 2014). The barriers to recreational activities such as low socioeconomic status and lack of access to facilities and appropriate places to exercises have been identified (Kemperman & Timmermans, 2011; Young et al., 2014). According to Young et al. (2014), Latinos and African Americans who live in impoverished communities are less likely to be physically active compared to their peers living in more affluent communities. Similarly, lack of safe places to exercise is a barrier. According to Kemperman and Timmermans (2011), youth are more likely to engage in recreational activities in safe environments.

Benefits

It is well documented that recreational or physical activities can have positive effects on youth by promoting goal orientation and academic achievement (Barnett & Weber, 2008; Chomitz et al., 2009; Fischer & Theis, 2014; Grissom, 2005; Hollingworth, 2012). Grissom (2005) conducted a study to examine a relationship between physical activity and academic achievement. The researcher conducted a study in California that

consisted of 884,715 participants from grades 5, 7, and 9 throughout the state. The results indicated that participants who did physical activities scored higher in reading and math than participants who did not (Grissom, 2005).

Barnett and Weber (2008) also conducted a study to examine the benefits of recreational activities on adolescents. The researchers randomly chose families from 23 schools located in a county that includes families from different socioeconomic status. The sample consisted of 51% females. Sixty-seven percent were African American and the rest were European American. The researchers found that engagement in team or individual physical activities had a positive effect on adolescents' social skills. Outcome-based evaluation of the benefits of recreational activities, such as this one, supports the argument that youth need this type of activity in their daily lives (Barnett & Weber, 2008).

Smith and Lounsbery (2009) also conducted a study to examine the benefits of physical education. The study consisted of 338 sixth grade students. The results of the study indicated that participants with an increased level of physical activity did better academically compared to their peers who had less physical activity. For example, participants who had more physical activity were 6 times more likely to do better in reading and 2.5 times more likely to do better in math than their peers (Smith & Lounsbery, 2009).

Similarly, Chomitz et al. (2009) conducted a study to examine a relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement. The sample consisted of 1,841 participants from grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 from the Cambridge Public School Department in Massachusetts. The participants were diverse both in race and economic status. The

intervention consisted of physical activities done during physical education classes. Participants were evaluated by assessing scores on comprehensive exams for English and math as well as fitness physical activity test from a scale of 0 to 5. The English and math exams were scored based on a pass/fail method. The data was analyzed through bivariate and multivariate methods. The researchers found that 72% of the participants passed the math exam and 89% passed the English exam. According to the researchers, being female was associated with passing the English exam. Also, participants obtained higher scores on the standardized math and English exams than their peers who did not participate in physical activities. The researchers concluded that physical activity can have a positive impact on academic achievement among children (Chomitz et al., 2009).

Hollingworth (2012) conducted a study at five care facilities in England. Thirty-two participants aged 18-24, who had been in foster care for at least 12 months starting age 16 were interviewed. Twenty-seven of these participants were interviewed for the second time in the following year. All of these youth in this sample were leaving the foster care system with success in the areas of education and employment. Fourteen caregivers and teachers, whom these youth named as their main support system, were interviewed. This one and a half hour semi-structured interview covered questions regarding family history, education, social involvement, spare time activities, and future career. All of the successful youth interviewees reported that they participate in recreational activities such as basketball, football, martial art, running, art, and volunteering in social service agencies. Participants also acknowledged the influential role of their supportive caregivers in inspiring and connecting them to resources to attend such activities. The results of this study suggest that involvement in sports and having

supportive caregivers can lead to educational accomplishment and future employment for this population.

Barriers to and Benefits of Vocational Training

Barriers

According to Hudson (2013), a low percentage of foster youth and foster alumni complete not only higher education, but also vocational training. The main barrier to receiving adequate vocational training for foster youth has been identified as lack of supportive adults or mentors (Hudson, 2013). Hudson (2013) conducted a qualitative study using focus group methodology to explore the perceptions about mentoring among youth living in foster care in Los Angeles, California. A total of 27 youth ages 14 to 17 were divided into four focus groups each consisting of 6-8 youth. The racial makeup of the participants were 37.0% African American, 37.0% Hispanic, 7.4% White, 3.7% Native American, 3.7% Asian-Pacific Islander and 11.0% Other. The researcher found that participants expressed their need for authority figures and mentors including spiritual mentors and peer mentors; however, the type of mentors they need most is career mentors who could guide them with decisions about getting a good job and going to college and deciding a major depending on what they want to be. Many participants expressed that they know what they want to be (e.g., a veterinarian, an electrician, an FBI agent, a social worker); however, they stated that they did not have a career mentor who would help them achieve their goals. The researcher found that participants perceive a career mentoring relationship as “getting ‘a taste’ of the profession/vocation in which they are interested and lasting only a couple of weeks” (Hudson, 2013, p. 134).

Benefits

Research shows that vocational training and mentoring can have positive effects on at-risk youth, including those in foster care (Ahrens et al., 2011; Spencer et al., 2010). Ahrens et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study to explore the relationships that foster alumni had with supportive non-parental adults while in foster care and identify, among other things, types of support and contributions from their mentors to their development during adolescence. Participants were 23 foster alumni, ages 18 to 25. The researchers found that many of the participants identified adults they had met through their involvement with the foster care system such as a caseworker and a supervisor in a vocational training program as their supportive non-parent adults (Ahrens et al., 2011).

Ahrens et al.'s (2011) study revealed the types of support provided by youth's mentors that helped them. One type of support identified by the participants was tangible support such as assistance with career and educational goals. Other types of support that the participants identified included emotional support, serving as a role-model, general guidance and advice, and support as a parental figure. The findings also indicated that youth's relationships with supportive non-parental adults had significant positive influence on their socio-emotional, cognitive, and identity development. According to Ahrens et al. (2011), gains in these areas of development are believed to improve youth's outcomes, including educational and employment outcomes. The positive impacts on the socio-emotional development identified by the participants included learning healthy conflict resolution and emotional self-regulation skills. The positive impacts on the cognitive development identified by the foster alumni included learning executive function skills such as planning and learning independent living skills that they

previously did not have. The positive impacts on the identity development identified by the participants included improved self-worth. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that mentoring can be beneficial for foster youth and can strengthen their adult outcomes by improving many areas of youth's development such as improved self-confidence, improved communication skills, and increased ability to develop goals and plans to achieve them (Ahrens et al., 2011).

Spencer et al. (2010) conducted a literature review on the effectiveness of youth mentoring programs and on the outcomes and needs of foster youth transitioning into adulthood. The researchers identified several features of effective mentoring relationships. One is duration; the researchers found that mentoring relationship length was significantly associated with better outcomes for the mentees such as improved emotional and behavioral functioning as well as greater likelihood of having reached their original goals and having made more plans for their future. Another feature is consistency; the researchers found that consistent contact allowed the mentors to offer various types of meaningful assistance and guidance. Emotional connection is another feature that contributed to the effectiveness of mentoring relationships; the researchers found that emotional connection was associated with better outcomes for mentees such as improved sense of self-worth and decreased levels of emotional and behavioral problems. The researchers concluded that mentoring can be beneficial and help meet some of the critical needs of youth transitioning into adulthood (Spencer et al., 2010).

Conclusion

The literature review demonstrated that foster youth living in group homes face numerous challenges including emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues and lack

of social support. The review of literature also demonstrated that as a result of these challenges, foster care youth experience higher rates of educational failure, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration than youth in the general population. It was also found that racial disparities in outcomes exist. Despite the challenges, the literature review indicated that there are protective factors that can mitigate the effects of negative experiences. Finally, this chapter demonstrated that recreational activities and vocational training can have positive effects on at-risk youth, such as foster care youth living in group homes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Intervention and Nature of the Program

The purpose of this program is to provide recreational activities and vocational training for foster youth living in group homes. Youth living in group homes have limited access to services that meet their unique needs. They are also often deprived of resources and opportunities to succeed in their lives (Hollingworth, 2012). As a result, they are more likely to develop low self-esteem and less likely to achieve academic success than youth in the general population. Recreational activities are proven to be effective in developing physical, mental, and social health (Kemperman & Timmermans, 2011). Furthermore, Fischer and Theis (2014) stated that recreational activities can develop goal orientation and prevent academic failure among this population.

Moreover, foster care youth have fewer employment opportunities compared to their non-foster care peers. For instance, Macomber et al. (2008) highlighted that only 16 to 25% of foster care youth have steady and stable jobs. Therefore, foster youth need to have vocational training prior to their transition out of the foster care system to increase their employment opportunities (Hudson, 2013). In view of these necessities, it was decided that the proposed program designed to offer both recreational activities and vocational training would be effective.

The proposed program will be held during after school hours, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the host agency, Rosemary Children's Services in Pasadena, California. Participants will be recruited from the clients of the host agency. It will be a one-year project, starting in May 2016. The vocational training will be provided in the computer room, and the recreational activities will be held outdoors in the backyard of Cottage, one of the group homes run by the host agency that has a gym and a basketball court. The program will be held twice a week. The vocational training will be held on Mondays and the recreational activities will be held on Fridays.

The group will consist of eight to ten people. The program will be supervised by a director who holds a Master's degree in social work (MSW). This director will have an assistant to help in developing the curriculum and organizing activities. The director will also hire two professional coaches/trainers, one for the recreational activities and the other for the vocational training. These coaches are expected to develop healthy relationships with the participants and serve as appropriate role models for them. There will also be a social work intern who will help in facilitating the group.

Target Population

The target population for this program is female foster youth between the ages of 11 and 17 who are living in group homes run by Rosemary Children's Services, located in Pasadena, California. Since this agency provides residential services only to females, all of its group home residents are female. Foster youth of both genders are more likely to develop depression than youth in the general population. Within the foster care population, females are more likely to experience depression than males (Postlethwait et al., 2010). Moreover, Postlethwait et al. (2010) found that depression was associated

with likelihood to engage in delinquency among females. In other words, depression can be considered as a predictor for delinquency among female foster youth.

All clients of this agency will be encouraged to join this program; however, participation will not be mandatory. According to the host agency's 2013-2014 annual report (Rosemary Children's Services, 2014c), the racial makeup of the residents during the time period was 32% African American, 55% Latino, 11% White, and 2% Native American. Since the agency's clients come from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals from diverse backgrounds are welcome in this program.

Members will be highly encouraged to participate and learn actively. They will be asked to do some homework assignments, especially for vocational training. For instance, they might be asked to prepare a draft resume after a resume training session to be reviewed and edited by their coach.

Host Agency

The host agency for this program will be Rosemary Children's Services which is located in Pasadena, California. According to its official website, the history of this agency started in the 1920s (Rosemary Children's Services, 2014b, para.1). The great necessity of helping abused, neglected, and abandoned children inspired Mrs. Emma Spear and other female companions from the Shakespeare Club to offer services in Rosemary Cottage. This agency was officially established in 1928, and the first group home for teenage girls was built in the same year. Since then, the property and services have expanded. The mission of the agency is "to help children, adolescents and families heal from their pasts and move toward productive and fulfilling futures, by providing the

highest quality of therapeutic support, education and permanency planning” (Rosemary Children’s Services, 2014d, para.1). Each year Rosemary Children’s Services serves 450 children in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange Counties. This agency offers many programs including residential treatment program, mental health services, foster care and adoption services, and therapeutic behavioral services (Rosemary Children’s Services, 2014d, para.5). The ultimate goal of this agency is to provide quality care and services for foster youth to increase their well-being and opportunities for the future. This program will also help clients by engaging them in recreational activities, and therefore preparing them for a future career. The host agency is willing to support this project by providing space and equipment such as computers.

Identification of Potential Funding Source

In order to locate a possible funding source, this grant writer conducted an Internet search by using key terms such as “grants,” “funds,” “youth program,” and “foster care” on the search engines such as google.com, yahoo.com, and bing.com. Initially, this writer used google.com and found paths to different databases such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service Administration for Children and Families (www.acf.hhs.gov) and grants.gov (www.grants.gov). At the state level, some helpful websites were identified. An example of a state level grant that provided grants was (<http://www.ca.gov/Grants.html>).

At the federal level, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) appeared to be a great funding source for this program, since its mission statement of providing effective human service delivery, is related to the goals and objectives of this project. In addition, it has served the target population of this program. However, the majority of

the funds that were available in the past were expired. Currently, there are only three funds available and all of them are specific for Native Americans which is not relevant to the target population of this project (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., para.2).

At the local level, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (<http://www.caseyfamily.org>) was found to be relevant to this project. However, online information relating to the funding requirement was unavailable. In addition, attempts to register and further communication were pending. As a result, this grant writer reviewed other funding sources.

Joseph Drown Foundation (JDF) was another funding source. It was offering services to youth who were also the target population of this project. However, this foundation had a concentration on education which was not relevant to this project.

Criteria for Selecting of Actual Grant

Various databases of public and private funding were considered and reviewed in order to locate proper funding for this project. The most significant criteria for locating a proper funding source were the target population and geographic area. The goal of this project was to address the needs of female foster youth in an agency located in Pasadena. Therefore, the funder had to be interested in providing resources for youth in Los Angeles County. Even though some foundations were interested in providing funds to develop programs for foster youth, they were serving other geographic areas that excluded the intended area of interest. Duration and amount of funding were also taken into consideration during the search for a potential funder. Since this project was intended to last one year, the grant writer required the funding to last for the year. The

funding amount was also taken into consideration, since the funding needed to be enough to cover the costs of the program.

Ultimately, Weingart Foundation was selected as the potential funding source of this program because it proved to meet all of the aforementioned criteria. This foundation supports nonprofit agencies that offer services to underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the society in six Southern areas of California including Los Angeles (Weingart Foundation, 2014). Because the goals, target population, areas of interest, and geographic concentration of the host agency matched with those of the Weingart Foundation, this foundation was selected as the funder for this program.

Description of Selected Foundation

The Weingart Foundation is a private nonprofit foundation established in 1951 by Ben and Stella Weingart. The purpose of this foundation is to support other nonprofit agencies to offer quality services to underprivileged youth, families, and older adults (Weingart Foundation, 2014). The Weingart Foundation is interested in offering services to disadvantaged youth which is relevant to the goal of this project. Although most of the funding is provided for one or two years, this foundation does not limit its grant to a specific period of time; that is, the grant is awarded until the agency accomplishes its goals (Weingart Foundation, 2014). This foundation has developed different types of grants. Core Support, the main focus of this funder, offers up to \$200,000 to eligible applicants. Non-core support includes Capital Support, Capacity Building, Program, Program-Related Investments, and Small Grant Program which provides funding to applicants that are applying for less than \$25,000. The applications are handled by the Regular Grant Program. The submission process requires all applicants to submit a letter

of inquiry with the exception of those applicants who are applying for the Small Grant Program. Subsequently, applications are reviewed by the Board. Detailed information about this foundation, the letter of inquiry, and guidelines are available online on the official website of this foundation (Weingart Foundation, 2014).

Needs Assessment

Through careful literature review, specific interventions are recognized as effective approaches for this project. According to the literature, foster youth tend to develop a lower self-esteem, educational acquisition, and career success (Hollingworth, 2012; Hudson, 2013; Macomber et al., 2008). For example, Macomber et al. (2008) pointed out that there is a higher risk of future unemployment for foster youth, and Hudson (2013) revealed that foster care youth are more likely to become jobless and homeless. Therefore, developing motivational programs should be considered as a priority for this population.

Various studies point out that recreational activities are significantly important for youth (Chen, Kim, & Gao, 2014; Chen, Welk, & Hoens-Matre, 2014; Young et al., 2014). For instance, a study conducted by Kemperman and Timmermans (2011) indicated that recreational activities are essential in developing physical, mental, and social health for youth. Moreover, many studies have proved that youth need vocational training in order to be ready for the future job market (Hudson, 2013; Wells & Zunz, 2009). As a result, two motivational programs, vocational training program and recreational activity program, were identified.

According to the former Director of Residential Department at Rosemary Children's Services, foster youth will benefit from services that will prepare them for the

competitive future job market. She also indicated that recreational activities help clients relieve their stress in a positive manner and physical activities make clients feel renewed and motivated to actively engage in other programs (L. Romero, Personal Communication, September 26, 2014). Development Director at the agency, M. Sabatella, also supported the need of this program (Personal Communication, September 27, 2014). Both directors confirmed that group home youth in Rosemary Children's Services need more recreational activities and vocational training.

Proposed Budget

This project was estimated to cost \$55,582.00. This program requires a part-time director, a program assistant, and two coaches. The annual salaries and benefits of these staff were estimated to be \$13,800 for the part-time Director, \$9,000 for the part-time program assistant, \$4,800 for the vocational training coach, and \$4,800 for the recreational activity coach. The total staffing was calculated to be \$32,400.00. Other budget was allocated for non-personal expenses, such as uniforms and running shoes for participants. These items cost \$1000. Ink and paper for printing out handouts and job applications will cost \$100. Light refreshments will also be provided which will cost \$1900. Total direct program cost is estimated to be \$6,200.00 and total indirect program cost is expected to be \$6,562.00. This project will cost \$55,582.00. The host agency will contribute a total of \$10,420.00 in kind support. Therefore, the total of \$45,162.00 is requested to implement the proposed program (see the Appendix).

Evaluation

The program will be evaluated based on several factors. In order to evaluate the first objective under goal number one attendance will be tabulated by coaches and will be

reported to program director. The second objective under goal number two will be evaluated by obtaining participants' report cards before and after they have participated in recreational activities. The results should reflect that 80% of participants have improved their grades by 30% towards the end of the program.

The first objective of the second goal will be evaluated based on participants' ability to conduct an online job search in front of vocational coach. Approximately 70% of participants will be able to conduct online job searches. Also, participants will create resumes that will be evaluated based on the vocational coach's guidelines. At least 70% will be able to do this. The second objective of the first goal will be evaluated by providing a true/false questionnaire on professional conduct. At least 70% of participants should answer 70% of questions correctly. In addition, participants will be provided with a written exam on interview questions. At least 70% of participants should be able to answer 70% of questions correctly.

CHAPTER 4
GRANT PROPOSAL

Proposal Summary

The purpose of this project is to develop a recreational and vocational program for female foster youth living in group homes. The goals of the proposed program are: (a) to enhance educational achievement and (b) to provide better job opportunities for this population. The proposed program is a 1-year project, held twice a week at Rosemary Children's Services, located in Pasadena, California. The group will consist of eight to ten youth. The program will be supervised by a director who holds a master's degree in social work (MSW). Staff members will include a program assistant, a vocational coach, a recreation coach, and a social work intern. The target population for this program is female foster youth between the ages of 11 and 17 who are living in group homes run by Rosemary Children's Services.

The program is designed to last for a year. It will be held twice a week. The vocational training will be held on Mondays 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the computer room. The recreational activities will be held on Fridays 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the backyard of one of the group homes run by the host agency.

Introduction

Rosemary Children's Services is a non-profit agency that provides services to over 400 children and youth every year. The agency was first founded in 1920 by Emma

Spear and many other women from the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena who recognized the need to help children who were abused, neglected, and abandoned. The agency was officially established in 1928 (Rosemary Children's Services, 2013b). The agency has served the community for nearly a century and has built a reputation as a leading agency providing quality services to children in need. As a result, the agency has strong support from and partnerships with many organizations, businesses, and government agencies including the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Temple City Sherriff, Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), South Pasadena Unified School District (SPUSD), American Society of Interior Designer (ASID) Pasadena, MOMS Club of Pasadena, and Pasadena City College.

This agency has a reputable Board of Directors. The former Executive Director Greg Wessels, who has recently retired, demonstrates the strength of the agency's management. Greg Wessels started serving foster youth as a Child Care Counselor over 30 years ago. Then he became Chief Program Officer for Families First, and Guadalupe Homes. Afterwards, he served as the Director of Social Services for the Idaho Youth Ranch and the Optimist Boys' Home in Los Angeles. Greg Wessels joined Rosemary Children's Services in 2000 as the executive director. He has started new programs such as Mental Health Day Treatment and Adoption Placement services since then (Rosemary Children Services, 2014).

Rosemary Children's Services is a 501 (c) non-profit organization. This fits the eligibility requirement of Weingart Foundation since it considers only non-profit agencies as eligible for receiving a grant. Rosemary Children's Services is a well-established

agency that knows how to operate and function well even in bad economic years.

Moreover, it has received funds from many different foundations. The most recent grant was awarded by the Rose Hills Foundation in January, 2015, for the amount of \$50,000.

Rosemary Children's Services is also known by Weingart Foundation and has received funds from this foundation before.

Rosemary Children's Services and the Weingart Foundation share common goals and interests. Consistent with the Weingart Foundation's geographical areas of interest, each year, Rosemary Children's Services serves more than 400 children in Southern California counties, including Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange Counties. The agency's mission is "to help children, adolescents and families heal from their pasts and move toward productive and fulfilling futures, by providing the highest quality of therapeutic support, education and permanency planning" (Rosemary Children's Services, 2014d, para.1). The agency's mission meets Weingart Foundation's requirements for awarding grants, since the Weingart Foundation offers grants to nonprofit organizations that provide health, human services, and education for people, especially those who are disadvantaged and underserved.

Needs Assessment

Most foster youth come from dysfunctional or broken families and have a history of abuse, neglect, and some kind of trauma (Brockett & Anderson-Nathe, 2013; Hudson, 2013; Williams, 2011). Moreover, foster youth often experience placement instability and relational disruptions and are unable to form a healthy ongoing relationship with an adult or have a positive role model (Williams, 2011). As a result, foster youth are at risk for various negative outcomes including mental health disorders, low self-esteem,

delinquency, educational failure, and unemployment (Baker & Calderon, 2004; Hollingworth, 2012; Hudson, 2013; Macomber et al., 2008; Postlethwait et al., 2010; Williams, 2011).

Although studies have shown that foster youth are a vulnerable population, current programs and resources that meet these needs of this population are limited (Williams, 2011). Research has indicated that recreational activities can be effective in improving educational outcomes (Chomitz et al., 2009; Grissom, 2005; Smith & Lounsbury, 2009). Research has also found that vocational training can be effective in increasing job opportunities for this population (Ahrens et al., 2011; Hudson, 2013).

Moreover, in the host agency, residential services are provided only to females. Postlethwait et al. (2010) found that foster youth of both genders are more likely to develop depression than youth in the general population, but within the foster care population, females are more likely to experience depression than males. Postlethwait et al. (2010) also found that depression was associated with likelihood to engage in delinquency among females. This program is designed to help the female residents of the host agency to increase the level of psychological wellbeing and motivation for academic and career success.

In addition, directors of the host agency are interested in providing its group home residents with an evidence-based intervention designed to improve their educational and career outcomes (L. Romero & M. Sabatella, personal communication, September 27, 2014).

Program Objectives

The goals of this program are: (a) to enhance educational achievement; and (b) to provide better job opportunities for this population. In order to achieve these goals, several objectives are identified.

Goal 1: Enhance educational achievement.

Objective 1: Recruit about 8-10 participants to join the recreational activity group.

Objective 2: Participants will engage in recreational activities such as volleyball and basketball.

Outcome: At least 80% of participants will improve their grades by 30% at the end of the program.

Goal 2: Prepare participants to obtain better job opportunities.

Objective 1: Participants will learn how to conduct online job searches and create a professional resumes.

Objective 2: Participants will be able to conduct themselves professionally during a job interview and will be able to answer interview questions.

Outcome: At least 70% of participants will be able to conduct online job searches and create a professional resume based on guidelines provided by the coach.

Timeline

Month1:

1. Recruitment and interviewing of staff will take place by the director of the host agency. The program director will hire an assistant and two coaches, one for recreational activities and the other for vocational training.

2. The program director and the two coaches will develop the curriculum.

3. Participants will be recruited.

Month 2:

1. The program will start.

2. The vocational coach will build rapport, conduct a pre-test, and start the training by educating participants about online job searching strategies.

3. The recreational activity coach will build relationships with the youth and start recreational activities by teaching the rules and warm up exercises.

4. Program assistant will obtain school reports.

Month 3-4:

1. The vocational coach will continue building rapport with the youth. He/she will also educate them how to fill out job applications.

2. The recreational activity coach will teach the youth basic rules and techniques of volleyball.

3. Volleyball teams will be formed and youth will play volleyball in two teams.

Month 5-6:

1. The youth will be asked to fill out some job applications and print them out.

2. The vocational coach will review the application and will edit and give feedback to each of the participants individually.

3. The vocational coach will also introduce and explain some basic job-related rules such as dress codes.

4. The youth will continue doing exercises and playing volleyball in teams. They will receive feedback from their recreational activity coach.

5. The program's assistant will conduct middle stage evaluation

Month 7-8:

1. The curriculum will be revised if necessary based on the result of the evaluation.

2. The recreational activity coach will teach the youth basic rules and techniques of basketball. The coach will also form basketball teams.

3. The vocational coach will educate the youth about interviewing process and inform them how to present and be marketable.

4. Participants will be able to create effective resumes.

Month 9:

1. The vocational coach will conduct practice interviews.

2. The youth will play basketball in teams.

Month 10:

1. The recreational activity coach will facilitate volleyball games with non-participating clients of the host agency.

2. Practice interviews will be conducted with the program director and the program assistant in a formal office setting.

Month 11:

1. The youth will continue doing exercises individually and playing basketball and volleyball in teams.

2. The vocational coach will introduce strategies and communication styles in order to educate the participants how to keep their jobs after they are hired.

3. The program assistant will obtain school records again to compare with the initial reports.

4. The vocational coach will conduct a post-test.

5. The volleyball and basketball teams will have final games.

Month 12:

1. The vocational coach will prepare participants for termination.

2. The vocational coach will provide participants with their revised resumes and will give feedback on their resumes.

3. The recreational activity coach will prepare participant for termination and conduct a post-test.

4. Groups will celebrate their graduation from this program.

5. Evaluation results will be analyzed and a report will be submitted to the funder.

Methods

This proposed program will offer vocational training and recreational activities to female residents in group homes. One study found that involvement in team or individual physical activities improved adolescents' social skills and future involvement in social activities (Barnett & Weber, 2008). Hollingworth (2012) also found that there is a direction correlation between involvement in leisure activities and youth's overall well-

being, self-esteem, and future accomplishments. In addition, Hudson (2013) found that having a vocational training would result in a long-term, positive psychological outcome such as positive self-image for foster care youth. Furthermore, Wells and Zunz's (2009) study found that foster youth expressed their needs of having healthy relationships with successful adult figures who can serve as mentors and positive role models. Williams (2011) also emphasized that having a healthy relationship with an effective adult mentor will help foster youth develop positive self-image and learn constructive social and academic skills. Another study indicates that foster care youth are more likely to have learning problems (Williams, 2011), and have lower levels of educational attainment than youth in the general population (Baker, 2004; Smithgall et al., 2004; Williams, 2011). The proposed program is designed to assist the youth with academic needs through recreational activities.

Lower employment opportunity is another challenge for foster youth. Hook and Courtney (2010) compared employment status among low-income foster youth and non-foster youth who shared similar demographics and found that foster youth had fewer employment opportunities. Macomber et al. (2008) also found that even when foster youth were employed, they usually received lower income and were at a higher risk of being laid off and unemployed, compared to their non-foster peers. Baker (2004) stressed the importance of offering vocational training in group homes and teaching foster youth the strategies for obtaining and maintaining a job. The youth in foster care need vocational training in order to reduce these barriers to their career success.

Evaluation

The program will be evaluated based on several factors. In order to evaluate the first objective under goal number one, attendance will be tabulated by coaches and will be reported to program director. The second objective under goal number two will be evaluated by obtaining participants' school report cards before and after they have participated in recreational activities. The results should reflect that at least 80% of participants have improved their grades by 30% towards the end of the program.

The first objective of the second goal will be evaluated based on participants' ability to conduct an online job search in front of vocational coach. Approximately 70% of participants will be able to conduct online job searches. Also, participants will create resumes that will be evaluated based on the vocational coach's guidelines. At least 70% will be able to do this. The second objective of the second goal will be evaluated by providing a true/false questionnaire on professional conduct. At least 70% of participants should answer 70% of questions correctly. In addition, participants will be provided with a written exam on interview questions. At least 70% of participants should be able to answer 70% of questions correctly.

If this program is evaluated to be successful, the host agency's grant writer will look for other funding sources. Moreover, fundraising events will be held and donations will be sought in order to continue this program.

Budget Narrative

Program Director: The qualifications for this position require the candidate to hold a master's degree in social work (MSW). This individual should have a minimum of 3 years of experience in program coordination. Some of the roles that this individual will be responsible for include reviewing attendance reports, ensuring that the mission of

the program is fulfilled, inputting data of program progression, coordinating documents as the end of the program approaches, supervising staff performance, preparing report to be sent to funder, and other procedures necessary in the operation of the program. This will be a part-time position of 10 hours per week for a total of \$13, 800 per year with benefits at 25%.

Program Assistant: The person in this position will need to have a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW). This person will need to have at least 1 year of experience working with adolescents. This person will be responsible for monitoring participant activities, ensuring that equipment and necessary supplies are ready, distributing and collecting paperwork from participants, and other necessary tasks. This will be a part-time position of 10 hours per week for a total of \$9,000 per year with benefits at 25%.

Vocational Coach: The person in this position will need to have a bachelor's degree in counseling or business. This person will need to have at least 2 years of experience working with adolescents and at least 4 years of experience working as a vocational coach. This person will be responsible for educating youth on resume building, online job searches, job interviews, and evaluation of participants' progress. This will be a part-time position of 5 hours per week for a total of \$4,800 per year.

Recreation Coach: The person in this position will have a bachelor's degree in physical education (BPE). This person will need to have at least 2 years of experience working with adolescents and at least 4 years of experience working as a recreational coach. This person will be responsible for coordinating youth into different sports teams in basketball and volleyball. In addition, the person in this position will be responsible for teaching youth the rules of each sport, monitoring youths' progress, providing

encouragement, preparing youth for the playing each sport, and making sure youth stretch before playing any sport. This is a part time position of 5 hours per week for a total of \$4,800 per year.

External Evaluator: At the termination of the program an evaluator will be contracted to evaluate the effectiveness of both the recreational and vocational training program. The external evaluator will be paid a flat rate of \$2,702.

Program Supplies: The program supplies necessary for the program include paper, pens, pencils, folders, paper clips, staplers, markers, etc. About \$100 a month will be spent on program supplies equivalent to \$1,200 per year. This will cover the costs for supplies needed in both the recreational and vocational program.

Shoes and Uniforms: Approximately \$1,000 will be spent over the course of the program to provide shoes and uniforms for participants who cannot afford to buy them.

Copying and Printing: About \$100 will be needed over the course of the program to cover the costs of printing for both programs. Documents to be printed include participants' resumes, evaluation forms, and satisfaction surveys.

Refreshments: Snacks will be provided for both the recreational and vocational training program. About \$20.5 per session will be spent on refreshments for a total of \$166 a month. This is equivalent to \$2,000 per year. Refreshments to be provided include cookies, water, juices, and chips.

In-kind Donations: Administrative costs were calculated at 10% of the total direct program costs equivalent to \$3, 860. The costs for office space will be covered by the host agency equivalent to \$3,060 per year, which amounts to \$255 per month. The cost of utilities will also be covered by the host agency at \$360 per year. The equipment

necessary for the program will also be provided by the host agency. Equipment needed for the program include telephones, laptops, fax machine, desktop computers, etc. Approximately \$7,000 per year will be spent for the use of this equipment averaging to about \$583 per month.

Please refer to the Appendix for the line-item budget.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Lessons Learned

The grant writer learned the steps of grant writing through this process. One important lesson learned was that when writing a grant, there is a lot of planning that needs to be made before developing a program. Initially, the grant writer had an idea of how the program would function. However, there were some factors that the grant writer did not consider when this idea was first thought about. The grant writer had to develop a plan of how the program would run in terms of staff, time, costs, and recruitment. These and other factors were part of the planning process when designing the program.

While writing the needs assessment, the grant writer learned that this population is at risk for mental health disorders, delinquency, educational failure, and unemployment (Baker, 2004; Hollingworth, 2012; Hudson, 2013; Macomber et al., 2008; Postlethwait et al., 2010; Williams, 2011). Also, this population is in need of positive role models and healthy relationships, since many of them come from unstable families in which there are no appropriate role models. This was one of the reasons why the grant writer decided to have a vocational coach serve as a role model for the foster care youth.

The evaluation section was challenging for the grant writer because there were a number of factors that needed to be considered. For example, the grant writer learned that in order to eliminate bias, an external evaluator would be helpful. Initially the grant writer

thought about including only a pre-test and post-test as an evaluation instrument.

However, the grant writer realized that another evaluation would be necessary in the middle stage of the program in order to receive feedback and implement changes in the curriculum. Also, initially it was difficult for the grant writer to come up with a method of evaluating educational achievement. However, the grant writer learned through the treatment team meeting held at the host agency that staff members were reporting educational progress based on school report cards. This gave the grant writer the idea of measuring academic success based on school report cards.

While developing the timeline, the grant writer found that it was necessary to allow sufficient time for each activity. It was challenging for the grant writer to create a timeline for both recreational activities and vocational training program because there were so many elements in each program. The grant writer continuously edited her timeline because it was necessary for the activities of both groups to fit in a one-year period.

The grant writer also had the chance to learn more about foster care youth and how the foster care system functions both by reviewing the literature and by interning at Rosemary's Children's Services. While interning at this agency in June, 2014, the grant writer was able to see the needs of this population firsthand. The grant writer had a chance to talk to the foster care youth and learn about the challenges they faced. The grant writer learned that most of her clients were not doing well in school. In addition, the grant writer observed that the older foster care youth were acting out when they were close to being discharged from the foster care system. The grant writer discovered that the older foster care youth were concerned about not doing well at school and not being

prepared for the job market, and they were unsure if they would be able to survive on their own. These were some of the reasons that motivated the grant writer to develop a program for foster care youth. The grant writer realized that it was important to develop a program that would target adolescents age 11 through 17 because it would support those who are aging out and prepare younger ones from an early age.

While reviewing the literature, the grant writer learned that there were insufficient resources for foster care youth. The grant writer learned that this population faces many distinct challenges. One major challenge that was very common in the literature was the difficulty of obtaining employment. For example, Macomber et al. (2008) stated that foster care youth have less employment opportunities than their non-foster care peers, and even when employed have lower incomes than their non-foster care peers. Also, the grant writer learned that mentors serving as vocational coaches for youth can be effective in improving their employment outcomes (Ahrens et al., 2011; Spencer et al., 2010). This is one of the reasons that the grant writer was motivated to hire a vocational coach who would also be responsible for mentoring the youth.

Several important factors were learned when attending a grant budget workshop. For example, the grant writer learned that it is important to consider the indirect costs because often non-profit agencies that fail to consider the indirect cost end up lacking funds to continue the program. The grant writer also learned that it is important to plan ahead to consider the costs that will be needed for the program.

The grant writer found that it was helpful to talk with the director of Residential Department and the Developmental Director of Rosemary's Children Services regarding the grant proposal. Initially, the grant writer was uncertain of whether to include a

vocational training program in addition to a recreational program. However, when talking to the Residential Department Director, the grant writer learned that a vocational program was also necessary (L. Romero, Personal Communication, September 26, 2014). This director informed the grant writer that a vocational program would benefit the youth because many of them had a hard time obtaining employment after they had left the foster care system. The grant writer also spoke with the Developmental Director who provided the grant writer with useful information about previous foundations that had funded the agency. The grant writer learned that the funder that she had chosen for her program had funded this agency in the past. Also, this director provided the grant writer with contact information of the foundation chosen for this project. This director also provided feedback to the grant writer on goals and objectives developed. An annual report of the agency's progress was also provided by this director.

Analysis of the Process

This was the first time that the grant writer had experienced writing a grant proposal. The process involved numerous factors, such as developing a budget, timeline, evaluation, and literature review. Some of these tasks were difficult for the grant writer with no background knowledge on grant development. However, the grant writer was able to overcome these challenges by attending a grant budget workshop, and obtaining feedback from her thesis advisor as well as her thesis editor. The grant writer found that writing a grant takes a lot of time and dedication. In addition, the grant writer discovered that she has a passion to help foster care youth and was motivated to do work with this population in the future.

The grant writing process involved talking to different people to obtain guidance and feedback on the grant writer's topic of interest. The grant writer had to interview several people such as directors, supervisors, agency staff, and professors. It was important for the grant writer to have good time management because often times the grant writer had to conduct interviews on days that she was off. The days that she was off were also days in which the grant writer had to finish other school work.

One limitation of this program is that the host agency only serves females, and the challenges may be different if this program were to be reproduced in the future for males. The fact that this program only targets female foster youth could be considered a limitation.

Strategies to Enhance the Project and Recommendations

Some of the activities could have been enhanced if there had been more room in the backyard of the agency. For example, if there had been a pool, participants could have benefited from learning how to swim as a recreational activity. Also, recreational activities could have included more sports. Another strategy to enhance the program is for the vocational coach to keep track of the foster youth's progress even after they leave the foster care system.

There were several components in the literature review that were important to enhance the project. For example, it was important to have a solid literature review to understand the underlying issues that this population faces. In addition, the grant writer had to ensure that the needs of the program were established. Having clear goals and objectives were also crucial for the development of the program. The setting also needed to be able to accommodate the proposed program because there were two types of groups

that were going to take place in one agency. Lastly, it was important to have an appropriate evaluation plan because it would measure the program's success.

In order to enhance this project further literature review is recommended. Due to time limitation, the grant writer was not able to include all the literature for each group. A recommendation for further research is to conduct a similar study focusing on female foster youth in group homes. Another recommendation is that if this program were to be replicated, the program should be provided for male foster youth as well, and further research on the needs of this population should be conducted as well.

Implications for Social Work and Multicultural Practice

Obtaining funding to carry out the proposed program at Rosemary Children's Services will help foster youth who have been exposed to trauma and face various challenges such as emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues, as well as lack of support and guidance from adults, and provide them with better chances of success in life. As illustrated by the literature, foster youth living in group homes are at increased risk for a number of negative outcomes including lower educational achievement (Cox, 2013, Courtney et al., 2011; Unrau et al., 2012), higher unemployment and lower income (Courtney et al., 2011; Hook & Courtney, 2010; Macomber et al., 2008), and higher rates of homelessness and incarceration (Dworsky et al., 2013; Yaroni et al., 2010). According to the National Association of Social Workers (2008), the primary mission of the social work profession is "to enhance human wellbeing 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" ("Preamble"). Youth in group homes and foster care alumni are among the most vulnerable in our society. Social workers should

be interested in the proposed program because it is their ethical duties to promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of this vulnerable population.

The proposed program is relevant to social policy, social work practice, education, advocacy for an underserved population, and research at both micro and macro levels. First, the outcome of this program will contribute to the knowledge base of the social work profession at the micro level by illuminating techniques to develop and implement evidence-based practices aimed to meet the needs of foster youth in group homes. Second, if proven successful, social workers can educate other social workers about the benefits of this program and advocate for the implementation of this program at group homes across the state and nation. The knowledge gained from this program can also be used to build a network of social workers to advocate for policies that are designed to enhance academic and employment outcomes of foster youth living in group homes.

The proposed program has multicultural relevance since children of every race and ethnicity are represented in the foster care system in this country. However, research indicates that racial and ethnic disparities exist in economic outcomes of foster youth, with African Americans having lower employment rates than Whites (Hook & Courtney, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative that social workers gain knowledge about differences among racial and cultural groups and provide services that are sensitive to their clients' cultures and to the unique needs and strengths within this population.

Conclusion

Overall, the goal of the project was to help foster care youth become self-sufficient and therefore prevent negative outcomes such as school dropouts,

unemployment, and homelessness. For this reason, the program aimed to increase academic achievement and prepare them for the workforce. Finding a job can be a challenging process, especially for foster care youth due to lack of support. Through vocational training, participants may be better prepared for the job market. Similarly, through recreational activities, participants may be motivated to do better in school and have an opportunity to obtain a higher education. Grant writing is a time-consuming process which requires a lot of effort from the grant writer. However, the vision of helping and supporting a vulnerable population and being aware of the importance of the proposed services motivated this grant writer throughout the whole process.

APPENDIX
LINE ITEM BUDGET

LINE ITEM BUDGET

Expenses	Amount	In-Kind Support
STAFFING		
Program Director, MSW (PTE)		
\$23.00 per hr x 10 hr/wk x 48 weeks	\$11,040.00	
Benefits @ 25%	\$2,760.00	
Program Assistant, BSW (PTE)		
\$15.00 per hr x 10 hr/wk x 48 weeks	\$7,200.00	
Benefits @ 25%	\$ 1,800.00	
Vocational Coach (PTE)		
\$20.00 per hr x 5 hr/wk x 48 weeks	\$4,800.00	
Recreation Coach (PTE)		
\$20.00 per hr x 5h/wk x 48 weeks	\$4,800.00	
TOTAL SALARIES WITH BENEFITS	\$ 32,400.00	
DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS		
Supplies (paper, pens, pencils, etc.)	\$1,200.00	
Copying and printing	\$100.00	
Refreshment	\$1,900.00	
Shoes & uniforms	\$1000.00	
Refreshments	\$2,000.00	
Equipment (telephone, laptops, etc.)		\$7,000.00
Rent		\$ 3,060.00
Utilities		\$360.00
TOTAL DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS	\$6200.00	\$10,420.00
TOTAL DIRECT PROGRAM + STAFFING COSTS	\$38,600.00	
INDIRECT PROGRAM COST		
Administrative costs @10%	\$3,860.00	
External evaluator @7%	\$2,702.00	
TOTAL PROGRAM COSTS	\$55,582.00	
TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED TO FUNDER	\$45,162.00	

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