

## Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: Family Outreach of Amherst

AGENCY ADDRESS: 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002

AGENCY PHONE NO: 413-549-5548 CONTACT PERSON: Laura Reichsman

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2015 CDBG FUNDING REQUEST: \$33,000

1. Project Name Strive To Thrive

2. Project Description: The Strive To Thrive Project will help chronically struggling families identify the challenges that keep them cycling from crisis to crisis and work intensively with them to create lasting changes that lead to healthy, happier, more successful lives.

3. Project Location 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002

4. Budget Request: \$33,000

5. Type of Activity (check one):

- Family stabilization
- Youth development
- Economic self-sufficiency (adult education)
- Food and nutrition
- Emergency & preventive services: rental assistance, fuel assistance, and shelter services.
- Other – please explain

6. National Objective: Objective #1, benefiting low and moderate-income households.

Total number of beneficiaries (individuals served): 120 individuals, 40 Families

Total Low/Mod beneficiaries (individuals served): 120 individuals, 40 families



ORIGINAL

### **A. National Objective Description**

Family Outreach of Amherst's proposed Strive To Thrive (STT) project meets national objective #1, benefiting low and moderate-income households. Through the STT project, these households will benefit by stabilizing their lives, breaking the cycle of crisis, and learning the life skills necessary to create a better life for themselves and their children. Family Outreach of Amherst will document participant eligibility by having clients complete and sign a self-declaration form for household size and income.

### **B. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy**

The proposed project is consistent with the Community Development Strategy priorities of family stabilization, economic self-sufficiency and preventative services. The project will help participants identify challenges in their lives that cause them to repeatedly experience crises that prevent them from achieving stability in life. We will work with participants to overcome those barriers, develop a plan to gain the skills necessary to stabilize their lives, and support them as they put their plan into action.

### **C. Agency Information**

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA) programs have been providing intensive outreach and support services for twenty-five years to the most vulnerable families in Amherst. Interrupting the cycle of child abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence is the primary focus of our community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA also offers information and referral services and advocacy related to many important issues, such as housing, childcare, counseling, health care and education. In the past year, FOA supported over 450 Amherst families as they struggled with:

- homelessness
- intervention by the Department of Children and Families due to poor parenting choices
- mental health episodes requiring hospitalization
- diagnosis of a serious medical condition
- loss of benefits because of uncompleted paperwork
- domestic violence episodes
- relapse into substance abuse

The goal of Family Outreach of Amherst is to support and assist the most vulnerable members of our community. When working with a family we have no identified "consumer." Each individual member of the family is a client and is offered services depending on their specific needs. This means that in a given week we may take a mother and infant to a WIC appointment, attend a special education meeting for an older sibling, take the teenager of the family to buy a swimsuit so they can participate in gym class at the middle school, and take the father of the family to a job interview. As a result, in one week, with one family, we have helped with nutrition, education, basic needs, and job skills.

### **D. Project Budget Information**

The STT budget has been prepared by the FOA program director and a budget analyst from the Center for Human Development with over 20 years of experience in business, grant accounting and administration. Analysis of personnel costs included examining comparable salaries of current staff members as well as an assessment of current payroll tax and fringe rates. Non-personnel costs reflect typical costs needed to support field caseworkers – staff training & development, office costs (i.e. postage, copier, telephone), staff mileage expenses, etc.

Assessment of existence of matching funds to support this initiative was confirmed.

## **Project Description**

When an Amherst family first requests assistance from FOA, they are usually in crisis. As we work with the family to resolve the crisis, we find that their situation is very often far more complicated than was first presented to us. Whether it is an eviction notice, a domestic violence incident, a call from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), or a mental health emergency, the one common denominator is that all other areas of their lives, often including their children, are ignored. This “survival mode” behavior is caused by a parent becoming overwhelmed and in many instances, triggered by past trauma in their lives. This behavior also creates a domino effect. For example, a parent who is struggling with a mental health crisis ignores a communication from their landlord, which leads to an eviction notice—and because of their mental health issue, they struggle to wake up in the morning, which then causes their children to miss school, which in turn causes the school to call DCF. One challenge leads to another and another and before long the parent is overwhelmed and the whole family is destabilized. In addition, we often find that this cycle occurs repeatedly. It is not uncommon for a family to approach us multiple times over a number of years. The presenting problems might have changed, but the behaviors have not. To address this, there must be a resource offered to the family that goes beyond simply resolving the latest crisis, a resource to help them truly stabilize their lives so that they can break their family’s cycle of crisis permanently.

We believe that once we have helped a family overcome a crisis, the best way to ensure that they remain stabilized is to help the parents to engage in healthy activities such as community engagement through volunteering, job training, and education, and to learn the skills or obtain the services needed to prevent them from cycling into crisis again. The Survive To Thrive Project is the natural next step in our work with families. For many parents with trauma histories and medical issues, they will not accomplish this by simply enrolling in a training program. There are concrete issues such as childcare and transportation that need to be resolved and issues that are far more complex due to the effects of trauma experienced by many of the families we work with.

One of the most striking things FOA caseworkers find while working with struggling families in Amherst is that when we meet the parent for the first time, they often present as much higher functioning than they prove to be once we get to know them better. This is a phenomenon that we experience over and over. It is also an experience that FOA caseworkers have come to appreciate, as it gives us a window into the kind of life that the parents dearly want for themselves. It is a life where they are able to negotiate difficult conversations or meetings, when at their child’s school or with a landlord. It is a life where appointments are kept and paperwork is filled out promptly, and it is a life where their goal of creating a better life for their family is successful.

Most of the time when a parent begins to meet with a FOA caseworker, there is an identified “next step” the parent would like to take, such as furthering their education, seeking employment, or simply becoming more engaged in the community. The parent often leads us to believe that they are close to accomplishing that next step. As we continue to work with them and get to know them better, the reality of their life sets in, bringing with it information that shows that they are struggling far more than they had first let on. But we keep that first impression in our thoughts as we develop a relationship with them. We never forget that their dream is to be the person that they presented at the first meeting because that is who they truly want to be: someone with a goal, who is able to effectively deal with whatever challenges might arise and who is able to raise healthy, stable children. The challenge is to take that dream and help them create a realistic plan that will make that dream a reality. The Strive To Thrive project will do just that.

When a parent enrolls in the STT program, a FOA caseworker will meet with the participant to identify the participant's specific goals and create an individualized action plan to meet those goals. The action plan will include personalized milestones to achieve the final goal. Together, the participant and caseworker will identify participant strengths so that the caseworker can help the participant access those skills effectively, both while they are following their action plan as well as in the areas in which the participant has struggled in the past. By addressing this early, the best interventions can be accessed quickly if the participant experiences a setback during their time enrolled in the project. For example, an identified strength might be that the participant is very successful at meal planning and shopping with a limited budget. The caseworker will help the participant see that the skill of researching grocery store sales, making an organized list, being able to add up the items in the cart as they shop, and creatively adjust recipes to use on-sale items are all strengths that can be used when engaging in job training or adult education classwork. Furthermore, these skills can be shared with other participants during STT peer support group meetings. An example of something participants struggle with might be that during their childhood and throughout their entire education experience they attended school only inconsistently. Common reasons for this in our client population are because of domestic violence, homelessness, or having to stay home to care for younger siblings so their parents could work. This experience can lead a participant to have difficulty staying engaged in an adult education program. By addressing this type of issue early in their work together, the caseworker and participant create an action plan that includes possible interventions if the parent begins to struggle with e.g., attendance.

Each STT action plan will be different and will address the specific needs of the participant. Participants will meet regularly with a caseworker to ensure that issues that arise as they work toward their goals will be addressed quickly, as many of the families we work with find that a temporary setback can overwhelm them and derail efforts to accomplish a goal. By way of illustration, if a parent is participating in a job-training program that requires them to attend 10 sessions and their child becomes ill and has to stay home for two days, the parent will often simply drop out of the training program, believing they have lost the opportunity to participate in the program. In the STT project the FOA caseworker will be checking in with the participant on a daily basis. When the caseworker learns that the participant needs to miss a few sessions of a training program, they will help coach the participant on how to effectively communicate with the training program to arrange to make up the sessions they will miss so that they stay in good standing with the program.

Each milestone the participant achieves while in the STT project will be treated as a success and accompanied by recognition from the program. For instance, if a young mother enrolls in the program and her ultimate goal is to work in graphic design, her milestones may be to obtain her GED, volunteer with an organization to help them with marketing materials to gain hands-on experience, enroll at a community college, solve transportation barriers, arrange for after school care for her children, apprentice with a local designer, and then obtain employment. To a mother of two children with a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education and no transportation, this plan likely seems daunting. However, the FOA caseworker will help her each step of the way, focusing on one milestone at a time and offering the support and resources necessary to succeed. In addition, since each milestone will be treated as a success, if the mother accomplishes two of the goals, obtaining her GED and securing a volunteer position, this will be an enormous accomplishment as it will build her confidence, give her more employment opportunities in the future, and model consistency and the value of education and community engagement to her children.

**Demonstrate that the community at the local level has prioritized the activity.**

During the public hearing held on December 4, 2014, the Amherst community spoke of its desire for family stabilization, economic self-sufficiency, and preventative services. The Survive To Thrive project addresses all three. In addition, FOA recently polled forty-five parents and asked if they would be

interested in enrolling in a program to help them achieve their employment, education, and community engagement goals. Thirty-eight responded in the affirmative.

Over the course of the CDBG funding period we anticipate enrolling approximately sixty participants living in Amherst.

### **Project Need**

Many families who live below the poverty line do not experience crisis on a regular basis. While their budget may be very tight, they are able to pay their rent and experience healthy relationships, and their children grow up to be healthy adults. However, for families living in poverty that have the added risk factors of housing instability, mental or physical health issues and unstable relationships, the chances of their children experiencing healthy childhoods are very slim, likely leading to another generation of adults who make bad choices and lead unstable lives. The most effective way to break this cycle is to ensure that parents are raising healthy, stable children—and the best way to do this is to give parents the opportunity to access resources, services and programs that will help them be the healthiest parents they can be. The STT project will accomplish this by not only assisting parents to enroll in programs and services that help them create a more stable life, but will support them at each step as they make their way toward their goals. The Project's caseworker will problem-solve with and support participants as issues arise so that a setback does not become a failure.

FOA works with approximately forty-five families in Amherst at any given time. While families often come to us when they are experiencing a crisis, most families continue to work with us beyond the crisis to help stabilize their families further. Of the forty-five families in our caseload, the majority has expressed a desire to obtain resources and skills to create a better life for themselves and their children. In addition, during a parent support group FOA ran last year, the 20 participants were asked to list their priorities for creating a better life for themselves in order of importance. Job training and skill building were the two highest priorities. When asked what their biggest challenges were, the majority reported lack of support and difficulty negotiating complex systems as the most problematic barriers.

### **Community Involvement and Support**

FOA is currently implementing a Client Needs Assessment that will be completed before the inception of the STT project. Clients will be asked to identify specific resources and activities that they would find most beneficial to ensure the success of the program and the answers will be incorporated into the STT project. Furthermore, as the project is implemented, activities and services will be adjusted in response to participant feedback.

The STT project will be supported not only by paid staff but also by a team of volunteers from the community with specific expertise, such as financial planners, employment and child development specialists, and nutritionists. This team will offer both group workshops and one-on-one counseling.

### **Project Feasibility**

The FOA staff is well known and respected in the low-income community of Amherst. The program manager and her staff have forty years of collective experience and all are specialists in resource referral, housing issues, and parenting. Four of the five FOA staff members are bi-lingual.

FOA has been providing intensive outreach and support services for twenty-five years. At its core is community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA has earned a reputation throughout the community as a program that can be relied on to effectively serve those families facing the greatest challenges with the fewest resources. FOA has consistently been responsive to the needs of struggling Amherst families, through our case management and advocacy programs and our special programs such as the Amherst Juvenile Court Diversion Program, The

Learning for Life literacy project, the Voices for Change women's empowerment project, the Domestic Violence Response Project, the Women's Resource Empowerment Network group, the Family Outreach at Echo Village community center, and our latest project, the FOA satellite office based at the ARPS Family Center. All these projects have one common theme: they were all implemented in response to a stated need from both Town officials and community members alike. FOA has a proven record of providing timely, quality services to Amherst's most fragile citizens.

FOA is a program of the Center for Human Development, which has 60 programs spanning the Pioneer Valley and Connecticut. As a program of CHD we can operate as a small, grass-roots community-based organization but we are supported by an exceptional team of bookkeepers, budget managers, payroll and human resource experts and a management team that is talented and supportive. This ensures expert oversight and efficient contracts and budgets management.

### **Project timeline**

July 1, 2015 – STT Project committee will convene participants, volunteers and staff to create the STT project handbook with policies and procedures. Participant intakes will begin.

August 1, 2015–May 1, 2016 – STT participants will be enrolled, individualized plans will be developed, and specialists will be recruited to consult on the specific goals of participants.

September 1, 2015–May 1, 2016 – Participants will start trainings, employment searches, and volunteer positions. STT peer support group and topic-specific workshops will begin.

October 1, 2015–May 31, 2015 – STT participant milestones will be celebrated at a monthly community lunch.

June 2016 – The STT final community event will be held honoring all participants and volunteers.

### **Project impact**

#### **The anticipated impact of the project will be:**

- Participants will gain the skills they need to stabilize their lives.
- Participants will become more self-sufficient.
- Participants will be able to effectively communicate and model the skills they learned to their children.
- Participants will become more active in the workforce and community, giving them more resources to better their lives.
- Participants will be able to address issues that arise more quickly. An example might be that if they have a financial setback and fall behind on their rent they will have the communication skills and confidence to approach their landlord to negotiate a payment plan.

The effectiveness of the project will be measured by a pre and post questionnaire given to the participants, an analysis of the milestones reached, and feedback from staff and volunteers.

#### **How will the impact of this service on individual clients be tracked over time?**

The participants who enroll in the program will be asked to agree to be interviewed at the end of the project and to be contacted once in the next two years so that we can document the level of effectiveness of the program over time. In addition, we anticipate that the majority of participants will stay involved in FOA activities for longer than the twelve-month period of the initial project, thus allowing us to continue to monitor their success and support them if they have a setback.

## **Define the direct and indirect outcomes that will result from the project.**

### **Direct outcomes:**

- Chronically struggling families will become more competent.
- Children of chronically struggling families will be exposed to higher functioning parents and will learn the life skills needed to live successful lives
- The community will gain stronger, more competent parents, employees and volunteers.

### **Indirect Outcomes:**

- Because chronically struggling families will gain the skills needed to become more self-sufficient and will become higher functioning, town services will be less utilized and ultimately less overwhelmed.
- Because participants will become more actively involved in their children's lives, better relationships will form at the child's school, lessening the strain on school personnel.

## **Identify quantitative and qualitative measures to determine that the outcomes are achieved.**

We will track quantitative measures by documenting the following:

- number of participants enrolled in the program
- number of milestones accomplished by each participant
- number and type of each goal reached by each participant

We will track qualitative measures by administering a survey to each participant to evaluate life skills competency and quality of life perception at the time of enrollment and again at the time of completion of the program.

## **Will this service enable clients to become self-sufficient?**

The definition of self-sufficiency will vary by participant. In some cases there will be a clear trajectory from a STT participant relying on public benefits to the participant obtaining employment. In other cases, self-sufficiency will mean that the participant no longer experiences crisis on a regular basis, can resolve issues that come up in a timely way, is fully involved in the community through good relationships with their child's school and volunteer opportunities, and can model these skills to their children.

## **How is this service linked to other human/social service programs in the community?**

The STT project will collaborate closely with many social service programs in the area such as literacy, ESL, and job training services, as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Survival Center, after-school programs and mental health providers.

|  |  |               |
|--|--|---------------|
| <b>Family Outreach of Amherst</b>                  |  |               |
| <b>BUDGETS</b>                                     |  |               |
| <b>July 1, 2015 thru June 30, 2016</b>             |  |               |
| <b>PERSONNEL</b>                                   |  |               |
| FAMILY CASEWORKER                                  |  | 35,141        |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL SALARIES</b>                          |  | <b>35,141</b> |
| F.I.C.A.   |  | 2,646         |
| UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE TAX                     |  | 67            |
| UNEMPLOYMENT TAX                                   |  | 0             |
| WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION                             |  | 499           |
| <b>Total Payroll Taxes</b>                         |  | <b>3,212</b>  |
| LIFE INSURANCE & DISABILITY                        |  | 412           |
| HEALTH INSURANCE                                   |  | 5,531         |
| DENTAL INSURANCE                                   |  | 247           |
| PENSION  |  | 1,054         |
| <b>Total Fringe Benefits</b>                       |  | <b>7,244</b>  |
| <b>Total Personnel Costs</b>                       |  | <b>45,597</b> |
| <b>DIRECT PROGRAM COST</b>                         |  |               |
| <b>STAFF TRAINING/204</b>                          |  |               |
| TRAINING/STAFF                                     |  | 250           |
| <b>STAFF MILEAGE/TRAVEL/205</b>                    |  |               |
| STAFF MILEAGE                                      |  | 240           |
| <b>G. SUPPLIES, MAT. &amp; EXP. ITEMS OF EQUIP</b> |  |               |
| SUPPLIES/PROGRAM                                   |  | 400           |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPLIES</b>                  |  | <b>400</b>    |
| <b>PROGRAM SUPPORT/216</b>                         |  |               |
| INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL                             |  | 281           |
| POSTAGE  |  | 100           |
| PRINTING/REPRODUCTION                              |  | 200           |
| SUPPLIES/OFFICE                                    |  | 100           |
| TELEPHONE MOBILE                                   |  | 480           |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPORT</b>                   |  | <b>1,161</b>  |
| <b>PROGRAM FACILITIES</b>                          |  |               |
| RENT OFFICE  |  | 615           |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM FACILITIES</b>                |  | <b>615</b>    |
| <b>Other Direct Costs</b>                          |  | <b>2,666</b>  |
| <b>Total Direct Costs</b>                          |  | <b>48,264</b> |
| <b>INDIRECT COST</b>                               |  | <b>5,695</b>  |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>                                 |  | <b>53,960</b> |
| <b>REVENUE SOURCES</b>                             |  |               |
| INCOME - AEC                                       |  | 10,000        |
| INCOME - FUND RAISING                              |  | 11,100        |
| INCOME - GRANT CDBG                                |  | 33,000        |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                               |  | <b>54,100</b> |



**CERTIFICATE OF TAX COMPLIANCE**

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law chapter 62C, sec 49A, I hereby certify under penalties of perjury that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am in compliance with all laws of the Commonwealth relating to taxes, reporting of employees and contractors, and withholding and remitting child support.

042503926

Social Security or Federal I.D. number

James Goodwin

Signature: Individual or Corporate Officer

December 29, 2014

Date

PLEASE PRINT

Corporate Name:

Center for Human Development Inc.

Address:

332 Birnie Ave

City, State, Zip Code:

Springfield, ma 01107



**ORIGINAL**

(FOIA)

**CERTIFICATE OF NON-COLLUSION**

The undersigned certifies under penalties of perjury that this Proposal or proposal has been made and submitted in good faith and without collusion or fraud with any other person, business, partnership, corporation, union committee, club or other organization, entity or group of individuals.

December 29, 2014

Date

James Godwin

Signature of individual submitting Proposal or proposal

Center for Human Development Inc

Name of Business

332 Birnie Ave Springfield, MA 01107

Address of Business



ORIGINAL

(FOA)