

# **Attachment 1**

# **Future Funding Proposal**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Family Involvement in Schools**

#### **Background**

Research has shown that when schools, families, and community groups collaborate to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Students with involved parents are more likely to get better grades, pass their classes, be promoted, have better attendance, show improved behavior and social skills, and adapt well to school. They also are more likely to graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Families vary in their motivation and ability to participate in school activities every bit as much as their children. For families who are not able or motivated to positively support a child's success at school, the school must outreach in effective ways and provide a continuum of supports to enable effective family involvement in school. It should be noted that culturally appropriate outreach will recognize and respect family structures in addition to the nuclear family where grandparent, aunts, cousins or fictive<sup>1</sup> kin take on leadership and caretaking roles in the household. Family involvement is seen as especially important when students have learning, behavior, and emotional problems. For students receiving special education services, long-standing views about the importance of family involvement have been enacted into law. Such legislated mandates, however, have been no guarantee of effective practice, especially as budgets have been scaled back over the last several biennia.

The TCDD State Plan prioritizes funding for a well-designed, systematic, and personalized program for outreach and ongoing encouragement of family involvement that also will address barriers to establishing and maintaining such involvement. The Council chose to focus its family involvements efforts to provide training and/or intervention to support active engagement by at least one family member for every four students who have developmental disabilities, by 9/30/2016 in Education Service Center Region 17 (ESC 17). TCDD has limited the project scope to a single geographic region to facilitate the evaluation of the impact of project activities. An Educational Service Center region was selected because ESCs are typically responsible for providing services to school districts and charter schools in order to implement school reform or improvement plans. This project will be implemented in Education Service Center 17 because TCDD has developed productive relationships with a number of community partners in this area through past and current grant efforts, and this should create additional opportunities for success.

ESC 17, located in Lubbock on the South Plains of West Texas, is comprised of 57 school districts in 20 counties across 18,996 square miles. It includes both urban and rural areas. Though the area is based in diversified agricultural economies, the area also has an increasingly expanding medical and allied health based economy. Like Texas in general, ESC 17 is a majority minority area, with the Hispanics accounting for 55.7 percent of the population – a greater percentage than the state as a whole. The population of families with children living in poverty ranges from 16-22 percent, with the majority of those being single parent households.

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<sup>1</sup> Fictive kin are individuals that are unrelated by birth or marriage, who have an emotionally significant relationship with another individual that take on the characteristics of a family relationship.

TCDD has awarded grants to entities in ESC Region 17 for a number of projects including:

- **Connections for Academic Success and Employment: Project CASE.** This project will help students with developmental disabilities ages 18-25 who are interested in furthering their education beyond high school, exploring careers and pursuing meaningful employment. Project CASE is a rural partnership of the Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research; Texas Tech University; South Plains community college; the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS); and local business partners.
- **Project IDEAL (Informing & Designing Education for All Learners).** This project is designed to help prepare prospective general-education teachers to work more effectively with students who have disabilities. At the broadest level, Project IDEAL is about systems change to help bridge the divide between the preparation of special and general educators so they can work more effectively with all learners. At its narrowest focus, Project IDEAL is about helping general education teachers make a positive difference in the lives of students with disabilities.
- **Head Start.** This project seeks to expand TCDD's previous Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) project to recruit, train, and support individuals to provide positive behavioral interventions and supports to people with diverse needs living in communities throughout Texas. The project is expanding PBIS strategies to staff employed by Head Start programs, early childhood settings, child care settings and pre-school settings. Specifically, the project expects to improve behavior intervention skills and knowledge of staff in child care, public school pre-K, ECI Head Start and other settings that serve children with disabilities ages 2 to 5. The project is expected to reduce the number of students expelled from childhood settings.
- **Impacting Disproportionality.** This project seeks to expand TCDD's previous PBIS project to recruit, train, and support individuals to provide positive behavioral interventions and supports to people with diverse needs living in communities throughout Texas. This project will expand PBIS strategies with special emphasis placed on intervention specifically aimed at impacting disproportionality. The project will implement research-based strategies that have been shown to reduce the number of disciplinary referrals (rates of suspension and expulsion of greater than 10 days in a school year of children with disabilities by race and ethnicity); establish procedures to monitor at-risk students to prevent escalating disciplinary action and support their success in school; and increase their skills in the area of cultural competency.

There are number of potential community partners in addition to past TCDD grantees, including:

- ESC 17
- Local Transportation Districts
- **The Parent Education Network** is a grant project of **Partners Resource Network, Inc.**, one of three federally funded **Parent Training and Information Centers** serving Texas parents of children and youth with disabilities from the ages of 0 to 26. Their goal is to empower parents of children and youth with disabilities in their roles as parents, decision makers and advocates for their children and their goal is to promote partnerships among parents and professionals, parent organizations, school districts and service agencies.
- **Lubbock Area United Way** seeks to empower people to address systemic issues to create substantial and long term change.
- **Texas Tech University – Child Development Research Center and College of Education.**

- **Texas Project FIRST** consolidates and provides parents accurate and consistent information about Special Education in Texas.

There also are a number of community based organizations effectively supporting family involvement activities via training and support:

- **Family to Family Network** provides IEP parent support in Houston, education and training events on the special education process, developmental disabilities diagnosis, referral to community resources and other networking opportunities.
- **Children’s Disabilities Information Coalition (CDIC)** is a community parent resource in El Paso that serves families through education and support by offering workshops on parenting children with special needs, educational rights, ARDs and IEPs and No Child Left Behind.
- **Special Kids, Inc. (SKI)** Educating and supporting families of children with special needs in the Houston area, SKI provides one-on-one consulting, hands-on skill building, and facilitates workshops to train professions and service providers.

TCDD has resources to fund a single entity capable of encouraging the participation of families of children with special needs in their local public schools. This entity would recruit, engage, empower and support families of children with special needs to become involved with their child’s public school. The entity would foster collaborations with local public schools, faith communities, providers of after school programs, transportation services and/or public housing providers to negotiate and leverage shared resources for the purposes of providing wrap around services for participant families. Engaging students with developmental disabilities and their parents, grandparents, extended family members, fictive kin and siblings will serve to create a sense of community and have a positive impact on the education system.

## State Plan Goal

Goal 1: Build collaborations within Education Service Center (ESC) 17 to demonstrate ways to create measurable improvement in at least two identified indicators of educational success for students with developmental disabilities by 9/30/2016.

Objective 3: Provide training and/or intervention to support active engagement by at least one family member for every four students who have developmental disabilities in ESC 17, by 9/30/2016.

## Expected Outcomes

Provide training and other necessary services to support the active engagement of at least 2,200 parents or other family members (25 percent of the students receiving special education services in the ESC 17 region).

This selected grantee will recruit, engage, empower and support families of children with special needs to become involved with their child’s public school. The project should foster collaborations with local public schools, faith communities, providers of after school programs, transportation services and/or public housing providers to negotiate and leverage shared resources to provide necessary services for participant families. Engaging students with developmental disabilities and their parents, grandparents, extended family members, fictive kin and siblings will serve to create a sense of community, have a

positive impact on the education system and further achievement and aspirations of children with disabilities.

The project will demonstrate that because families of children with disabilities are included in community collaborations that support learning, children with disabilities will achieve positive educational outcomes, including: improved grades, higher graduation and completion rates, fewer out-of-school disciplinary referrals, and increased likelihood of attaining postsecondary education or obtaining work of their choice.

## **Project Description**

This project will work with community partners to develop a menu of after school services and training for all families in the Educational Service Center Region 17 area, including children with developmental disabilities. The project will empower families to identify issues to be addressed such as access to after school programs, transportation or public housing and will recruit, engage and support families to develop relationships with their local schools, faith institutions, local foundations and other community partners.

The project will:

- Develop relationships with partner organizations that can reach the identified populations, taking into account the demographics of the region and strategies suggested by the demographics.
- Determine what type of training, information, and/or technical assistance is to be provided and develop an implementation plan.
- Implement the developed plan, evaluate the results, and use information gained from evaluation to improve project activities.

## **Proposed Funding Amount**

TCDD will provide funding up to \$300,000 per year. The selected grantee will be responsible for contributing match to the project, in the amount of 25% of total project costs for activities that are not in federal poverty areas and 10% for total project costs for activities that are in federal poverty areas.

## **Proposed Duration**

TCDD funding will be available for up to five years.

## **Other Considerations**