

# **Recommended Revision - Executive Summary**

## **Gulf Coast African American Family Support Conference**

### **Background:**

The Council initially approved an Executive Summary to fund a conference in Houston that replicates the Central Texas African American Family Support conference (CTAAFSC) hosted by Austin Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC) and sponsored by community partners from the public and private sectors. The CTAAFSC is an annual event, recently hosting the 13<sup>th</sup> conference, that has been successful in addressing myths about mental illness, treatment for mental illness, and issues related to health disparities experienced by African Americans. The CTAAFSC targets the African American community and focuses on providing culturally appropriate information for African Americans, their families, clergy and providers in a culturally appropriate forum, and also embraces all members of the community regardless of race/ethnicity. The mission of the CTAAFSC is to strengthen family and individual awareness of available health care services (behavioral and physical) through culturally sensitive education, supports, and partnerships. It strives to increase individual and family awareness of available behavioral and physical healthcare services, reduce stigma, and eliminate health disparities. This year's event attracted over 750 registrants.

### **Initial Grant Award**

TCDD initially authorized up to \$50,000 to Parents Anonymous, Inc., for the first year of a three-year project to host the Gulf Coast of Texas African American Family Support Conference in Greater Houston. The RFP authorized up to \$35,000 for year 2; and \$15,000 for year 3. The project started Sept. 1, 2010, and hosted the first conference on August 4, 2011, in the Greater Houston area for approximately 120 people with disabilities, their families, community members and professionals focusing on available health care services (behavioral and physical) through culturally sensitive education supports and partnerships.

At the August 2011 Council meeting, the TCDD Executive Committee reviewed information provided by staff summarizing various concerns about the management of the project by Parents Anonymous and voted to not continue funding Parents Anonymous for years 2 and 3 of the project. Central to the Committee's decision was a concern that it is crucial to the long term viability and success of this effort to have an organization with a presence within the geographic region in order to effectively build capacity and sustainability for the event long-term.

### **Revised Request for Proposals**

The Council approved a new executive summary for the Gulf Coast of Texas African American Family Support Conference in November 2011, authorizing funding of up to \$35,000 for years 1 and 2 and \$15,000 for year 3, and limiting applications to organizations in the Greater Houston area that were involved in supporting the initial conference held in August 2011. The Executive Committee approved funding in May 2012 of up to \$35,000 to Helpful Interventions for the first year of the GCTAAFS Conference. Helpful Interventions is a non-profit organization located in Houston that had not generated other income prior to receiving this grant and relies heavily on volunteers. That project started September 1, 2012.

As one of its first activities, Helpful Interventions, in collaboration with diverse community stakeholders, hosted a "Family Breakfast Summit" with keynote speaker Representative Garnett Coleman, District 147, Texas House of Representatives, in December 2012. The summit attracted 80 attendees, including 20 community-based agencies, social, health and faith based organizations, advocates, consumers and families. Participants shared their ideas on mental health issues, physical and spiritual health, as well as developmental disabilities and substance use. The satisfaction survey indicated 90%+ satisfaction of the event, and measured the attendee's interests and needs for the upcoming conference scheduled for November 2013.

### **Project Status Update**

TCDD Grants Staff have maintained considerable involvement with activities of the project thus far, attending the Summit and subsequent Project Advisory Committee meetings. From this involvement, we have concerns that Helpful Interventions, while well connected in the African American community in Houston and with a strong understanding and vision around the need for the conference and related activities, does not have sufficient support via paid staff to coordinate the array of activities necessary to plan and convene the conference as planned. Helpful Interventions relies mostly on volunteers and community partners to implement activities. In comparison, the Central Texas African American Family Support Conference has been hosted since its inception by Austin Travis County Integral Care (Community Center) which has considerable administration resources and staff that can support the effort.

As a mostly volunteer organization, Helpful Interventions does not have the capacity to be involved in many “non-core” activities that are key in building community partnerships. Project staff include a 75% time Project Director position that grant funded 6 hr/wk, donated time 24 hr/wk; a 50% time Project Coordinator position that is grant funded 13.5 hr/wk, donated time 6.5 hr/wk, and a Financial Manager who is grant funded 1.5 hr/wk and donated time 1.5 hr/wk. Other Helpful Interventions volunteers and community partners are fully occupied providing direct services and assistance to families who are dependent on the organization for supports that aren’t available elsewhere. TCDD staff therefore recommend authorizing an increase in funds for Helpful Interventions for years one through three to enhance Helpful Interventions administrative support and internal controls.

We also note that these challenges limit the extent to which smaller, grassroots organizations can participate in policy or systems-change work. In comparison to other smaller projects funded by TCDD through the Outreach and Development grants, several grantees pointed out in their final report that *the impressive outcomes achieved by committed volunteers provided with these small, time-limited grants would not be sustainable over time without funding to develop and maintain some infrastructure*. One grantee noted in their final report, “... although volunteers, including parents, have made significant contributions to the growth and success of [the project], many of them have full time jobs in addition to raising a child with a developmental disability, which could be another full time job to them. Thus, a full time paid staff and other support staff is needed to coordinate and manage the daily operations of the programs and services and to develop strategies to leverage additional resources from the community and other collaborating partners.”

### **Recommendations**

TCDD staff believes that Helpful Interventions needs a full-time, paid staff and other support to coordinate and manage the Gulf Coast of Texas African American Family Support Conference. The Central Texas conference has grown to become a 2-day conference with a total budget of approximately \$150,000 (including contributions and in-kind staff support). The host agency (ATCIC) has staff and agency support to help with logistics, marketing, web/technology support, administration support and other conference-related activities.

### **Proposed Funding Amount**

Increase funds available for year 1 from \$35,000 to \$75,000; increase funding for year 2 from \$35,000 to \$75,000; and increase funding for year 3 from \$15,000 to \$50,000.

If approved, Helpful Interventions will submit a revised workplan and budget proposing activities within that increased scope including staff positions, consultants, and other project-related costs.

### **State Plan Goal(s) and Objective(s):**

**Goal 5:** Demonstrate how to prevent unnecessary admissions to State Supported Living Centers (SSLC) by supporting community organizations in at least 1 HHS Region to increase their capacity to provide community-based services that support people with developmental disabilities to improve and maintain their health and to have access as needed to necessary healthcare, behavior supports, and/or respite, by 9/30/2016.

**Objective 3:** As funds are available, demonstrate and evaluate other strategies to support individuals with developmental disabilities to improve and/or maintain their health and well-being.

### **Intention of RFP**

To establish a sustainable Gulf Coast of Texas African American Family Support Conference (modeled on the Central Texas African American Family Support Conference and having the goals of strengthening family and individual awareness of available behavioral and physical health care services through culturally sensitive education, supports, and partnerships; reducing stigma, and eliminating health disparities).

### **Requirements per RFP**

#### **The grantee must:**

1. Work cooperatively with ATCIC to maintain fidelity to the original model (be tailored to African Americans but welcome individuals of any ethnicity; be developed by a committee that has a majority of members who are African American and reside in the Greater Houston area and that includes representatives from local businesses, health and human service agencies, service providers, faith communities, and individuals with developmental disabilities - including mental illness - and their families; conduct expansive outreach to recruit volunteers, speakers, and participants; provide training and information to participants about evidence-based, culturally competent, supports and services; offer CEUs for professionals; secure speakers who are nationally recognized; evaluate each annual conference by surveying attendees and using the information in planning future conferences; and ensure that no individual who wants to attend is turned away because of a lack of financial resources).
2. Develop local community support that will enable the conference to sustain itself as the CTAAFSC has, without continued grant funding from TCDD.

### **Expected Outcome**

An annual, sustainable, event modeled on the Central Texas African American Family Support Conference will be held annually in Greater Houston.

### **Project Description**

The Gulf Coast of Texas African American Family Support Conference would be established as a yearly event, free to people with disabilities and their families, hosted by Helpful Interventions, Inc., and sponsored by community partners from the public and private sectors.