

Contingency Funding Projects (Item G)

#1 Children with I/DD in Foster Care

Project Description: This project will increase inclusion of and opportunities for children with DD who have been impacted by the Arizona child welfare system. It will focus on empowering foster youth with developmental disabilities, along with their caregivers, to understand their rights in the special education system. These rights include the right of students with DD to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate, a concept described in federal law as “the least restrictive environment.” They also include the right to be included in school activities and provided educational services free from discrimination on the basis of disability, the right to not be subjected to restraint/seclusion practices that deny them access to a free and appropriate public education, and the right to individualized transition services.

Research suggests that children with disabilities are three to four times as likely as other children to be abused or neglected. The presence of a developmental disability in addition to other adverse circumstances, such as exposure to physical and/or sexual abuse and caregiver instability, increases the risk of emotional and behavioral difficulties and adverse educational outcomes. Children with disabilities are disproportionately represented in foster care, with twice as many students eligible for special education in foster care as in the general population. Although they are entitled to services and supports, Arizona foster youth with disabilities are routinely denied those necessary accommodations and end up in worse learning environments because they lack consistent educational advocates.

Through the work of Amanda Glass, Staff Attorney at ACDL, she has found that foster youth with disabilities, particularly developmental disabilities with emotional/behavioral challenges, are often segregated from their non-disabled peers, placed in unnecessarily restrictive school environments, and prevented from participating in schoolwide activities. Furthermore, these students face increased rates of restraint and seclusion in their school environments.

This project will have a two-pronged approach: 1) trainings to empower the community, and 2) direct representation.

1) Trainings

In order to spread awareness to the DD community of their rights, this project will provide know-your-rights trainings to students with DD and foster parent groups.

2) Direct representation

This project will offer direct legal and advocacy representation to individual students with DD who have been impacted by the Arizona foster care system. Specifically, it will provide representation to foster youth in transition planning or related IEP meetings. This will involve

working with the student and/or their special education decision-maker to understand the student's post-secondary goals and what services and supports are needed to help achieve those goals. This may also involve attorney/advocate attendance at student IEP meetings related to transition planning, and if necessary, representation in dispute resolution proceedings.

Project Cost: \$100,000 for one year.

Partners: Collaboration with AZ Center for Disability Law and school systems, VR, and DDD.

Results: The project will increase understanding of the rights of foster students with DD through outreach to care providers, such as group home administrators, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and guardians ad litem (GALs)/children's attorneys. Through education, these key players in the Arizona child welfare system will be empowered to more appropriately and effectively advocate on behalf of foster children with DD. The project will help these students to understand their right to transition services under IDEA, including the right to a comprehensive transition evaluation and services beginning during the school year in which they turn 16 years old. The project will support collaboration between school systems, vocational rehabilitation, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the creation of an appropriate and individualized transition plan to support students as they prepare for post-secondary life.

#2 COVID response example from the MD Council

Project Description: The Arc Maryland is now accepting applications for a **Small Grant**

Opportunity: Engagement and Comfort during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Grants are open to community-based organizations that provide supports to people with developmental disabilities who are affected by the statewide Coronavirus response. Funds must be used to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families and promote engagement with peers, alleviate anxiety due to social distancing, and/or increase positive shared experiences. Think about a gap in service. What do people need now due to social distancing, quarantine, or self-imposed isolation? How will people remain engaged with their friends and family?

What will be funded?

- Activities to remain engaged during social distancing;
- Items that alleviate anxiety due to social distancing; and,
- Other items needed for people experiencing social isolation

Grants shall be awarded for proposals \$500 to \$2,500 as approved for funding by the Arc Maryland's Grant Committee, in consultation with the Council.

Project Cost: \$50,000

Partners: Provider Community

Results: Reduce social isolation and anxiety

#3 Abuse/Neglect Trainings Throughout the State

Project Description: Fund abuse prevention trainings around the state, including in under-served areas. Topics could include healthy relationships; trauma support and counseling for people with I/DD; abuse recognition, reporting, anti-retaliation, and post-incident support; interviewing victims with I/DD; etc... Targeted audiences include individuals with I/DD; families; agency staff; providers; criminal justice; counselors. These trainings could be delivered in-person, by video, or via web. Train the trainers would help build the infrastructure of trainers available on this topic. Additionally, trainings should be offered in other languages, such as Spanish, to reach diverse audiences.

Project Cost: \$100,000

Partners: Multiple awards to different groups; or one award with a large number of collaborators.

Results: Currently, there is a shortage of affordable, accessible trainings out there for diverse audiences. Significant Council funding leveraged towards this effort could help to ensure we make systemic change towards prevention, reporting, and supporting a trauma-informed system.

#4 Building Inclusive Extra-Curricular Activities to Grow Leadership

Project Description: Fund schools to develop best practices around building inclusive extra-curricular activities and school clubs. This would fund training on strengthening policies and practices, all for the purchasing of assistive equipment, and expand options for all students to have the opportunity to build their leadership and socialization skills. Less than half of students with disabilities are in extra-curricular activities, due to a number of reasons: they don't have enough money, they lack transportation, it's not prioritized in their IEP, or they select their classes last, and extra-curriculars they are interested in get filled up. This would fund expand

affordable, accessible options to all of our students and build confidence for life beyond high school.

Project Cost: \$50,000

Partners: Districts/schools

Results: This would fund expand affordable, accessible options to all of our students and build confidence for life beyond high school.

#5 Renew the Adaptive Skiing Project

Project Description: For a second year, fund subsidized lift tickets and training costs for people with I/DD to ski with already purchased adaptive equipment.

Project Cost: \$75,000

Partners: NAU-IHD & Snow Bowl

Results: Those who have already participated in the program feel more confidence, excitement, and joy about a sport that before few, if any, could adapt for them.