

REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION
Request to the
XYZ Foundation
for support of child abuse prevention and family support services
Amount: \$2,000.00
June 30, 1998

Organizational Information

History

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION (ACRONYM) was incorporated in 1979 as FORMER ORG NAME (PA) by a small group of volunteers spearheaded by the Wilder Foundation. The organization received a charter from FORMER ORG NAME, Inc., a national child abuse prevention organization, and began offering confidential and compassionate group support to parents and children whose families were at risk for abuse or neglect.

During the past 19 years, FORMER ORG NAME has grown into a network of approximately 55 support groups or “chapters,” 2,200 parents and children and more than 900 volunteers statewide. Each group is formed and maintained by local volunteer advisory teams and led by volunteer professional facilitators, volunteer parent-leaders and volunteer children’s program leaders.

One January 1, 1997 the name of the organization was changed to the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION. The impetus for the decision came from parents and volunteers who felt the “FORMER ORG NAME” name created confusion with traditional 12-step programs (like Alcoholics Anonymous) and stood in the way of many parents seeking help they needed to deal with child abuse and neglect issues in their own families.

In January 1998, REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION opened its doors to the staff and programs of the Minnesota Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (MCPCA). The change will become final in May 1998. MCPCA will cease to exist and the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION is launching a new program called “Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota” which will become the new Minnesota affiliate of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA). The change consolidates duplicative overhead and channels more resources into child abuse and neglect prevention.

Mission and Goals

Although the central mission of the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION (ACRONYM) is the prevention of child abuse and neglect, the means to this end almost always focuses on a bigger picture that involves family and parenting issues, community support and the overall personal growth of participants. *The mission of the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION is to prevent child abuse and neglect by promoting positive parenting, healthy families and homes where children are valued and loved.*

In keeping with this mission, the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION--

- Provides free support services which help parents stop maltreatment and develop new skills to enhance problem solving abilities and build self-esteem.
- Provides programming for children of parent group participants designed to comfort them emotionally and help them develop appropriate social skills.
- Conducts public education and community-building activities to reach parents seeking help and create public support for violence prevention programs.
- Devotes extensive resources to volunteer recruitment, training, retention and recognition to help ensure high quality and consistency in all services.

Programs and Activities

ACRONYM employs the FORMER ORG NAME model in its parent support groups. This model is built upon shared leadership and mutual self-help. With the guidance of a volunteer facilitator and the skills of a parent group leader, parents meet weekly in a mutually supportive environment to share their frustrations and experiences, as well as to set personal goals. They are then held accountable by the group to make good on their own decision to change their behavior. This goal setting enhances parents' self-image and increases their personal belief in their own abilities to set and meet other life goals.

One of the reasons that ACRONYM groups are so effective is that they break the traditional "helper/helpee" model. This reversal results in people feeling more in control. Parents are the ones who take responsibility for changing their own lives.

A major component of ACRONYM's success is its work with the children. Each chapter provides free "childcare" that runs concurrently with the parent support groups. Children receive emotional support in a nurturing and safe environment and participate in activities specifically designed for abused or at-risk children. The children's groups are designed to promote self-esteem, teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills, improve social behavior and family relationships. The groups are led by experienced volunteer children's group leaders and assistants. Children participating in the program range in age from infants to teenagers.

Results

REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION groups help prevent potentially abusive situations before they get out of hand and frustrations turn to abuse and neglect. Results of 1997 surveys of parents participating in ACRONYM support groups indicate--

More than one-third of participants have been referred to ACRONYM support groups through child protection workers, therapists or counselors, schools, AFDC workers or other social workers.

Among the most common reasons participants cite for attending groups are--

- fear of harming their children

Participant Profile

70% of participating parents are female
57% of parents single, separated, divorced or widowed
50% of those served in 1996 were children
47% of parents have household incomes of less than \$20,000
65% of participating parents have little or no education beyond high school

- trouble controlling anger at home
- frustrations with raising teenagers
- challenges of single parenting

Among parents participating in ACRONYM groups, significant numbers indicate they have abused their own children in some form or degree--

- 63 percent have abused their children verbally
- 44 percent have abused their children emotionally
- 31 percent have abused their children physically

As a result of participating in ACRONYM groups--

- 95 percent of participants report that abusive behaviors have been reduced
- 85 percent of participants indicate that their parenting skills have improved
- 86 percent of participants indicate that they feel better about being a parent

Relationships with Other Organizations

“When times are tough with parenting decisions, I think about the parent support group meetings and am able to take a deep breath and know I’m not alone.”

--Group Participant

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION is the only statewide, direct-service child abuse prevention and treatment program in Minnesota. It’s also the only service that can claim no waiting lists, no application forms, no screening for eligibility and no fees charged to participants.

ACRONYM works closely with more than 250 county offices, schools, health and human service agencies and multi-cultural organizations based in local communities throughout the state. ACRONYM parent group facilitators also interface with other agencies by providing information and referrals to food shelves, GED classes, job training, parenting education, family therapy, chemical dependency treatment programs and other resources that parents may need to improve their situation.

Board Members, Paid Staff and Volunteers

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION is governed by a 12-person volunteer board of directors in conjunction with a 12-member Parent Leadership Team made up representatives of parent support group participants. Nine full-time paid staff with offices in St. Paul and Albert Lea support the work of more than 900 volunteers who contributed more than 44,000 hours last year.

Purpose of Grant

Situation

Every day, children across the country are subjected to abuse or neglect by the very people they rely upon for safety and security--their parents or caregivers. Because no one wants to believe that good people can hurt their own children and investigations of child abuse are kept confidential, the incidence of maltreatment is higher than most people imagine:

- In 1996, nearly 16,685 cases of child abuse involving 25,435 children were reported in Minnesota

- Experts believe that only one in four cases of child abuse is ever reported
- The rate of alleged child maltreatment for the entire state of Minnesota is one out of every 50 children.

And the problem does not end with childhood. Whether you consider them symptoms or causes, neglect and abuse in the family are at the root of many of the major problems society faces today--

- Adolescents in Minnesota corrections facilities are 3 times more likely than other adolescents to have been physically abused at home.
- Adolescents in corrections facilities were 2 1/2 times more likely to have witnessed the physical abuse of other family members.
- 90% of incarcerated men and women state that they were abused as children.
- Studies show that a majority of child abuse survivors grow up to maltreat their own children.

“I can’t say enough about how PA has changed my life and my children’s. I am able to look at and handle situations differently with the groups help.”

--Group Participant

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION believes that the family is the basic building block of society. With this in mind, ACRONYM works at the family level, with families who want to change. ACRONYM is committed to helping not only the children suffering from maltreatment, but also the parent -- an adult “child” who may lack the skills or resiliency required to struggle through each day without resorting to physical or emotional abuse as a way of coping.

Studies conducted by the National Center for Health Service Research have determined that the ACRONYM/FORMER ORG NAME model of parent support is one of the most effective approaches for helping parents make improvements in 11 key parent functioning areas. In September 1996, the US Commission on Child and Family Welfare cited FORMER ORG NAME for helping parents overcome abusive behaviors toward their children and supporting parents in taking leadership roles in addressing other community issues (*Parenting Our Children: In the Best Interest of the Nation*, September 1996).

The Funding Request

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION respectfully requests \$7,000.00 from the XYZ Foundation toward parent and children's group development and support in 1998. This funding will significantly expand the reach and maintain the high quality of the successful REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION programs.

Anticipated Outcomes

The cost of REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION services breaks down to about \$300 per participant last year. Compared with alternative methods of dealing with child abuse (private therapy: upwards of \$5,000 per family per year; foster care: more than \$10,000 per child per year), ACRONYM is the most effective at the lowest cost.

“The children’s leaders are wonderful--my kids don’t want to miss a meeting. I appreciate the new ideas for parenting especially since my husband and I have separated.”

--Group Participant

Funding for the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION under this proposal will facilitate significant growth in the number of at-risk parents and children participating in groups. The program will have the following important impacts:

- eliminate or significantly reduce the occurrence of child abuse and neglect
- increase the amount of social support received by parents and children
- increase parent's ability to effectively parent and provide nurturing to their children
- increase parent's problem solving, decision making, and relationship skills and their sense of self-esteem and competence as parents and well-functioning adults
- enhance children's self-esteem, sense of safety, relationship skills, and ability to solve conflicts non-violently
- help families access community resources to meet their daily living needs and increase their self-sufficiency, as appropriate.

Evaluation

Measuring the Effectiveness of Activities

The REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION uses a variety of methods and tools to evaluate the effectiveness of activities. These include--

- An annual survey of all advisory teams, group facilitators, children’s group leaders and other volunteers
- A semi-annual survey of parents participating in support groups.
- Monthly “chapter check-ins” which staff use to monitor the health and needs of each support group each month.
- Evaluation forms for all participants of training events and other activities for volunteers and parent leaders.
- Annual chapter “charter review meetings” conducted by program staff which help the leadership of each chapter conduct a self-evaluation. This process uses a set of standards which are common to all successful chapters and results in each chapter developing a plan to meet or exceed these standards. Chapters are also asked to evaluate the support services they receive from the staff as part of this annual quality assurance process.
- Monthly report forms which are completed by program staff and capture vital statistics on participants, training and outreach activities, chapter development, expenditures and other data required by certain funders

Criteria

An annual organizational plan is developed by staff and approved by the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION Board of Directors each year. Each goal specifies methods and tools to evaluate the success in meeting each goal.

Who is Involved in Evaluating Work

All parents, volunteers, staff and board are involved in either soliciting or providing feedback. REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION survey instruments have been developed with assistance from the Center for Evaluation and

Research through an agreement with the Children's Trust Fund. Survey responses are compiled by Adapt of Minnetonka.

How will evaluations be used.

Monthly reporting data are compiled at least quarterly in accordance with the conditions of grant contract agreements for state and federal program funding. These reports are filed with such funders as the Minnesota Children's Trust Fund, the Ramsey County Department of Human Services and state Victims of Crime Act, Department of Human Services, and Office of Violence Prevention programs. Reports are also shared with the REQUESTOR ORGANIZATION Parent Leadership Team and Board of Directors. The results of these surveys are used in program planning and in the design and development of training and chapter support activities.

"I really like coming to PA. I learn a lot about how to deal with situations. I'm trying to be the best single parent I can be."

--Group Participant