



**I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET**

Date: May 19, 2019

Contact Information

Organization Name: Valley Youth House **CEO Name:** Thomas R. Harrington
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Website: www.valleyyouthhouse.org **Board of Directors Chair Name:** Eric Luftig
Year Incorporated: 1973 **Primary Contact Name:** Harrison Fertig
FEIN: 23-7178820 **Primary Contact E-mail:** hfertig@valleyyouthhouse.org

Has your nonprofit ever applied to the Community Foundation? Yes No__ Not Sure__
 Has your nonprofit ever received funding from the Community Foundation? Yes__ No Not Sure__
 ___ Donor Advised Fund(s) ___ Fund for Chester County ___ Don't know/Not sure

Field/s of Interest:

___ Arts, Culture & Humanities ___ Environment/Animal Welfare ___ Education
 ___ Health Human Services ___ Religion

Organization Information:

Geographic Area Served: Valley Youth House serves all of Chester County from an office location in West Chester. The agency also serves 17 other Pennsylvania counties.

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served: Valley Youth House serves former and current foster care youth, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth and families with mental health or substance abuse issues, youth experiencing and at-risk for homelessness, and victims of abuse and neglect. The agency served over 22,000 youth annually. Last year, 400 individuals from Chester County were served.

Mission: Valley Youth House is the catalyst for youth to achieve their desired future through genuine relationships that support families, ensure safe places, and build community connections.

Proposal Summary: Funding would underwrite normalcy services for foster care and juvenile justice system-involved youth ages 14-24. Due to a lack of traditional family resources and financial support, system-involved youth are unable to afford items and activities that would be considered normal for many youth their age. In order to address this issue, funding would be available for necessities (clothing, food, etc.) and costs related to participating in age-appropriate activities such as extracurricular activities, social events, cultural experiences, and postsecondary education.

Annual Budget \$ <u>30,868,895</u>	<u>385</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>88</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>36</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>9</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>425</u>	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>3</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>3,300</u>	# of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>		

Top 3-5 funding sources:

- The agency's top five largest funders in the past twelve months have been:
1. The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc. - \$120,000
 2. The Donald B. and Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation - \$75,000
 3. Keystone Savings Foundation - \$75,000
 4. Moses Taylor Foundation - \$52,000
 5. Van Ameringen Foundation, Inc. - \$50,000

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 7,500

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

History - Valley Youth House opened its doors in 1973 as a single emergency shelter for youth in Bethlehem, PA. Since that time, the agency has expanded its reach to 18 Pennsylvania counties, including Philadelphia. Services have expanded to include housing, street outreach, life skills development, case management, and mental health and substance abuse prevention and intervention. Services impact the lives of over 22,000 children, youth, and their families annually. The population served by the agency's Independent Living Program (the subject of this application) is youth ages 14-24 who are homeless and/or formerly or currently involved in the foster care or juvenile justice system.

Goals - Valley Youth House services are based in a vision of a world in which every young person belongs to a nurturing community. Services include interventions to prevent foster care placements, life skills development and case management to prepare youth in the foster care or juvenile justice systems for adulthood, and housing services that provide counseling, case management, and skills development for older youth entering adulthood. The goal is to ensure that youth are not only safe and housed in the short term, but that they have a foundation—skills, credentials, support, and community connections—to sustain independence throughout adulthood.

Key Achievements - Outcomes for the agency's Independent Living Program (ILP) routinely surpass state benchmarks:

- Among youth served by the Independent Living Program last year, 78% achieved stable housing at program exit, compared to 68% of formerly homeless Pennsylvania transition age youth served by comparable programs;
- 78% had completed high school, attained a GED, or were on track to complete their educational goal, compared to 65% of other Pennsylvania youth from similar backgrounds served by comparable programs; and
- 56% were employed, compared to 44% of other Pennsylvania youth from similar backgrounds served by comparable programs.

Source for benchmarks: National Youth in Transition Database: Services and Outcomes Reports. (2018, March 2). Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/nytd-services-and-outcomes-reports>

Distinctiveness - The agency's ILP model is recognized by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for effective service delivery to homeless transition aged youth. Agency leadership staff are frequent speakers at state and national housing conferences on topics that include: street outreach and engagement strategies with homeless youth; housing services for homeless LGBTQ youth; and use of the Rapid Re-Housing model with youth.

Due to the success of agency youth programming, services have expanded throughout Pennsylvania through a combination federal, state, county, and private support. Independent Living Services are provided in 14 Eastern Pennsylvania counties, including the five-county Philadelphia region, as well as four counties near Pittsburgh.

2. Funding request

Description of key initiatives - Funding will underwrite a fund for normalcy services and activities for system-involved (i.e. foster care or juvenile justice) transition-age Chester County youth served by the ILP. Due to a lack of traditional family resources and financial support, system-involved youth are often unable to afford items and activities that would be considered normal for their peers. In order to address this issue, funding would be available for necessities (clothing, household goods, food, etc.) and other costs related to participating in age-appropriate activities such as extracurriculars, job hunting, tutoring, social events (e.g. prom), and postsecondary/vocational education. The proposed grant would allow these youth, who are often victims of abuse and neglect, to have a more “normal” and healthy transition to adulthood and to participate in activities that are considered milestones or regular experiences for their peers.

The Chester County ILP’s outcome goals include high school completion and post-secondary training according to the youth’s employment goals; employment; and discharge to stable housing.

With the assistance of a Life Skills Counselor, youth develop an individualized plan that outlines what they need to do in order to graduate high school and transition successfully into permanent housing and gainful employment. The process begins with an assessment of baseline levels in the areas of education, employment, life skills, and interpersonal skills, and then establishes the goals for each focus area.

EDUCATION: Youth without a high school diploma work with Life Skills Counselors to re-enroll in school if necessary, earn their diploma, participate in a vocational training program, or obtain a GED. Staff help clients locate the appropriate educational programs and assist with preparing applications. Youth are linked with additional resources as needed including remedial help to progress in their education. Youth who have earned a high school diploma are encouraged to engage in post-secondary education or vocational training and receive assistance applying for financial aid.

EMPLOYMENT: Success is defined by youth working full-time if not in school, or part-time while enrolled in an educational program. Counselors assist youth in the job search process (which includes job readiness skills and attaining identification documents). Youth attend agency workshops to develop job skills including researching and applying for jobs, resume and interview preparation, and professional communication and appearance. Some youth are also connected with professional adult mentors identified by the agency. After clients gain the first job, Counselors may help clients to identify a career plan to transition from minimum wage to a living wage.

HOUSING: Life Skills Counselors identify pathways for youth to transition to stable housing, which can include many scenarios depending on the age and needs of the youth. For younger youth, it typically involves reunion with their birth parents, or location of a foster family. For older youth, it typically involves finding and paying for their own housing whether they live by themselves or with a roommate. It may also include transition to another supportive housing program or residential service.

Specific needs and issues to be addressed - Providing normalcy services is a promising and evidence-based method of improving outcomes for system-involved youth. A report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (“What Young People Need to Thrive,” 2015) defines normalcy as “the collection of age- and developmentally appropriate activities, experiences and opportunities that should make up the daily lives of young people within the context of a caring and supportive family.” The report continues: “It is widely accepted that normalcy is a critical component in healthy social, emotional and cognitive development . . . participation in extracurricular and social activities can effectively change the life course for many young people and prepare them for a successful transition to adulthood. Providing

young people with opportunities to fully participate in school and community activities enables them to develop and broaden supportive networks that can continue into adulthood.”

Why it is important to fund this now – As described above, normalcy services are a crucial means of achieving good outcomes for system-involved youth, a population at dramatically increased risk for negative outcomes as they transition to adulthood. Research has found that only 26% of emancipated former foster care youth ages 23-24 worked at least 35 hours weekly and 68% lived in poverty. As many as 37% of youth aging out of care experience homelessness and up to 50% are unable to locate stable housing (e.g. couch hopping or living “doubled up” with relatives or acquaintances). Another study found that, among a cohort of 26-year-old former foster care youth, 20% had not gotten a high school diploma or GED and only 8% had 2-year college degree or higher.

Funding this project now will mitigate these poor outcomes and help youth better achieve success in a significant transitional period of their lives. By providing youth with the additional resources necessary to have a more normal transition to adulthood, this project will ensure that youth have the experiences and opportunities they need in order to become self-sufficient adults.

How impact and results will be demonstrated - The specific aim of this program will be to improve outcomes for youth in the Chester ILP through measures related to permanent, stable housing, employment/income, and educational attainment.

The impact of the project will be measured against the following goals:

- 80% will be discharged to stable housing
- 75% of clients will complete high school or will be on track for graduation at discharge
- 60% of clients will be employed at discharge

III. ATTACHMENTS

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter (**Attachment A**)
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations (**Attachment B**)
3. Most recent annual report (**Attachment C**) and financial statement, audited if available (**Attachment D**)
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for current fiscal year to date (**Attachment E**) and actual results for prior year (**Attachment F**)
5. Current strategic plan (**Attachment G**). If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.