COVID-19 Rapid Response  
Mini-Grant Letter of Request

In a few brief paragraphs, please explain:

1. **What geographic area is served?** *(If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served)*
   
   We serve the entire population of Chester County.

2. **What population is served, what has been the impact of COVID-19, and how has your nonprofit responded?**

   COVID-19 is a public health crisis of epic proportion. Those we serve are at increased risk of acquiring this disease compared to the general population, and unique risk factors threaten their survival. Strategic, rapid, and careful development of risk assessment, engagement activities, and harm reduction strategies must happen quickly to mitigate these risks. The people we serve, particularly those actively using drugs, incarcerated, returning to society from incarceration, and in seeking treatment already face immense challenges at finding healthcare, housing, employment, and other stabilizing health and social services. These increased risks are often the result of or are exacerbated by the behaviors associated with substance use disorders, the settings where drug use takes place, and the places where people access care. People who use drugs have always faced marginalization and stigma, but during this global pandemic, they have been pushed further out of planning and response. The utility and urgent need for organizations that serve these populations are given little consideration to COVID-19 response planning. While physical and mental health issues are rapidly escalating and the risk of overdose death and other infectious diseases has never been greater, organizations are tirelessly working to protect the health and wellbeing. Some significant risks that people who use drugs (PWUD) and their communities face from COVID-19 are:

   - There is a growing population of older PWUD who are at a significantly greater risk of acquiring COVID-19, suffering severe complications, being hospitalized, and dying;
   - Underlying medical conditions that are highly prevalent among PWUD, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), HIV, heart disease, Hepatitis, and tobacco use, place PWUD at an increased risk for COVID-19;
   - Opioid use causes respiratory depression and can increase risk of transmission, hospitalization, and death for a person who has acquired COVID-19;
   - Social distancing is a privilege that may not be possible for PWUD. Drug use, particularly in urban areas, sometimes occurs in group settings, and Syringe Services Programs are often crowded, making recommendations for social distancing extremely challenging to follow;
   - PWUD are at increased risk of homelessness and subjugated to spending time in public spaces or crowded shelters without access to resources for personal hygiene;
   - The pandemic has caused a disruption of drug supply, access to sterile equipment for drug use, and critical life-saving medications, leading to an increased risk of withdrawal, transmission of infectious disease, poor disease management, and overdose.

What is PAHRC doing during this crisis for those we serve?
PAHRC believes protecting our most vulnerable during this time of crisis is critical. Support from our partners, supporters, and funders is needed now to deliver life-saving public health strategies. Our organizational priorities during COVID-19 are:

1. **Naloxone Distribution** - We are meeting increased demand for naloxone across the state, particularly for those at the highest risk of overdose deaths. We are targeting our efforts to people who are actively using drugs and people leaving correctional settings.

2. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - We are finding, securing, and distributing PPE to PWUD, Syringe Services Programs, and front-line outreach workers who are providing care to our most vulnerable people during this pandemic.

3. **Public Health Messaging** - We are actively gathering, producing, and disseminating information to those we serve across the state. Our most vulnerable people lack access to information as print media, radio, TV, and social media are often out of reach. We are leveraging our broad network to keep people informed and safe during this pandemic.

4. **Education and Training** - We continue to deliver our interactive training programs online. We have a history of educating senior leadership and front-line staff at organizations that deliver mental health and substance use disorder care across the state. We continue to educate healthcare professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, social work, public health and other allied health professions. Delivering these programs now is critical to support organizations and individuals delivering care across the state.

5. **Technical Assistance** - We continue to provide consultation and support services to organizations and individuals across the state engaging in harm reduction and public health work.

6. **Advocacy** - Our advocacy work adapts to and continues on through the pandemic. The Governor has stated Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are essential life-saving services during this crisis. In reality, these services are always critical within their communities and yet are currently illegal in the Commonwealth. The current pandemic highlights the recognized utility of and need for expanded access to these evidence-based programs that are a point of access to healthcare for our most marginalized citizens. Before us lies a pivotal opportunity to strategically elevate and expand state-wide messaging to improve drug policy across the state.

**What has PAHRC done in Chester County specifically?**

Since the beginning of April, we have sent 163 doses of naloxone to Chester County, including the Chester County jail, community organizations, and individuals. We continue to market the availability of naloxone in Chester County and have requests coming in weekly to send more. PAHRC has delivered our Harm reduction Educators Removing Obstacles (HERO) training live in Chester County, before the pandemic, and over a webinar. We have created a local HERO group and connected advocates, organizations, the treatment community, and healthcare professionals across the county, whose mission is to advocate and promote evidence-based public health strategies that improve and save the lives of those that struggle with substance use disorders. We have also worked with Dr. Renee Cassidy, chair of the Regional Overdose Prevention Coalition (ROPC) and physician with the Chester County Department of Health and served on a number of panels for the ROPC. We are currently in the initial phases of setting up a regional advocacy team in the Southeastern Pennsylvania region to build capacity for localized advocacy efforts. We are involved and committed to improving the health and well-being of the citizens of Chester County.

3. **How much funding is sought? How does this compare to your annual operating budget? What will the funding be used for? What is the expected timeframe for use of funds?**

We are seeking $6,000 to support our naloxone distribution efforts. This funding will be used to support mailing, staff support, and marketing of naloxone to the residents of Chester County. $2,500 will be used for purchasing the packaging and postage required to mail shipments; $2,500 will be used to market the availability of free naloxone through news, social, and print media sources; and $1,000 will be used for the increased staff support for mailing and distributing naloxone. We intend to use these funds upon receipt of the incurred costs, as soon as possible upon request.
Please email grants@chescocf.org

_X___ This Brief COVID-19 Rapid Response Mini-Grant Letter of Request
_X___ Copy of annual operating budget or most recent audit
_X___ 501c3 determination letter

Request letters will be posted on the Community Foundation’s website, in order to share with fund advisors, donors, grant panelists, and other funding sources. Grants will be processed a few times monthly. We estimate mini-grants will range from $500 to $5000.

Please direct general questions & inquiries about the Rapid Response Mini-Grants to grants@chescocf.org.

Beth, Steph, Cierra or Kevin will answer you.