

# I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

*One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.*

*Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.***

*To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit [www.chescocf.org](http://www.chescocf.org)*

**Date 9/13/2023**

## **Contact Information**

Organization Name: A Child's Light

Address: 1251 Wisteria Drive, Suite B Malvern, PA 19355

Phone: 610-405-2968

Website: [www.childslight.com](http://www.childslight.com)

Year Incorporated: 4/18/2016

FEIN: 81-1896477

ED/CEO Name: Leslie Holt

ED/CEO E-mail: [achildslight1@gmail.com](mailto:achildslight1@gmail.com)

Board Chair Name: Suzanne Silver

Board Chair Approval (check here):

Primary Contact Name: Leslie Holt

Primary Contact E-mail: [achildslight1@gmail.com](mailto:achildslight1@gmail.com)

## **Organization Information:**

### **Field/s of Interest:**

Arts, Culture & Humanities

Environment/Animal Welfare

Education

Health

Human Services

Religion

**Mission:** A Child's Light (ACL) provides expedited mental health support for children and adolescents, ages 2-to-18, who have experienced severe trauma.

**Geographic Area Served** (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

A Child's Light serves children throughout all of Chester County.

**Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** ACL provides mental health treatment to children ages 2-18 recovering from severe abuse and/or trauma. Approximately 50 children are provided treatment per year.

**Annual Budget** \$ 183,250 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff 1

82 % of budget for program expenses 8 # of Board Volunteers

15 % of budget for administrative expenses 50 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

3 % of budget for fundraising expenses 500 # of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

**Top 3-5 funding sources:** Demos Family Foundation, United Way of CC, Blue Beards for Charity

**Is this grant proposal for:** Capacity Building  or General Operating ?

### **If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:**

Mission, Vision & Strategy  Governance & Leadership  Partnerships & Collaborations

Fundraising, Development & Marketing  Technology Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Proposal Summary:** A Child's Light is a growing organization that directly and profoundly impacts the lives of children with severe trauma. Mental health support sessions cost ACL approximately \$75 each and therefore, a grant in the amount of \$7,500 would provide 100 mental health treatment sessions to children as they seek to heal from abuse, trauma, or neglect and regain positive momentum in their lives.



## Grant Narrative 2023 – The Chester County Community Foundation

### History, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness:

A Child's Light (ACL) is a Chester County, PA based nonprofit organization that provides expedited access to trauma-informed mental health treatment for children ages 2-18 recovering from severe abuse and trauma. Program participants receive private mental health support from a therapist in the organization's network at no cost to them for an average of 9-12 months.

Leslie Holt is the founder and driving force behind ACL and works tirelessly to help children and youth receive the mental health treatment they need. Leslie is deeply impacted by this work because of her personal experience – she lost her beloved daughter Lana in 2018 after a sexual assault caused years of mental and physical pain, trauma, and PTSD. Leslie believes that Lana's life experiences could have been different if she had received mental health support immediately following the traumatic experience she endured. Although operational since 2019 under the name Radar Project, as of March 2023 the organization is officially recognized by the Internal Revenue Service under its new name, A Child's Light (ACL).

The success of the program relies on dedicated mental health therapists who recognize the importance of early intervention with young trauma clients to positively impact and re-direct the trajectory of their lives. With extensive clinical experience, these therapists typically diagnose a client within a two-week period. The program's goal is to expedite care, bypassing typical roadblocks, to give quick access to psychological support for children who have experienced severe trauma and/or abuse. The mental health care resources provided help to heal, build positive self-esteem, improve scholastics, cease/prevent self-harm, and most importantly, mitigate the need for self-medication with drugs and/or alcohol.

Children and families served by the program do not have the financial resources needed to access private therapeutic or mental health treatments and many have a wait time of up to 2 years to receive subsidized support. In crisis situations, the sooner a child can begin treatment the better the long-term outcome. By negotiating a fee based on a sliding scale with a network of local therapists and by funding the payment of 3 months/12 sessions up front, ACL is able to ensure that each client will have a strong, supported, professional, and high-quality mental wellness experience.

ACL funds modalities of psychological treatment beyond traditional Talk Therapy and includes support for Equine Therapy, Play Therapy, Art Therapy, and Parent/Child Interactive Therapy.

ACL has experienced tremendous growth within the past year due to the challenges in Chester County in being able to reach and support the growing number of children and young people experiencing mental health emergencies. In many cases, ACL is the only resource available to help these children gain access to mental health care.

Since 2019 ACL has grown, increasing the number of children served threefold. To date, the organization has funded mental health treatment for more than 107 children and expects that number to continue to grow throughout 2023 and beyond. Additionally, ACL remains the top-of-mind resource in the region and has fielded more than 300 emails and phone calls from people looking for mental health resources.

The organization has developed a network of over 75 therapists whom we can call upon to work with our clients. Recently, ACL witnessed a substantial need within the county to reach children in the Hispanic population who are in crisis and fund their early stages of healing. ACL dedicated time and energy to partnering with organizations and locating and establishing connections with bilingual therapists able to serve a unique population of individuals for whom English is not their first language.

The development of a strong Board of Directors that reflects the children and communities we serve, has led to the fierce commitment to meet the demands of every demographic needing assistance, leaving no group disenfranchised and/or lacking support.

The children who are referred to ACL have experienced some of the worst trauma that any human can endure. According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, "Child abuse and violence affect millions of children each year. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. After abuse or violence, many children develop mental health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. These children may also have serious medical problems, learning problems, and problems getting along with friends and family members."

ACL seeks to expedite support and overcome the range of challenges inherent in the local systems. Challenges include delays in access to county-provided services, limitations on available therapists, and specialty needs of younger children combined with the overall high cost of mental health treatment.

With a network of providers, sister agencies, and individuals, ACL is part of a team seeking to support a child exposed to life-changing trauma. When a problem is first detected by a parent/guardian, guidance counselor, concerned family member, or law enforcement, ACL is contacted to coordinate and provide funding for early intervention and treatment.

**Impact:**

While every child is unique and every case is different, expedited mental health treatment for children following trauma can provide numerous benefits and support their overall well-being, and the overall well-being of the community.

*Early intervention:* Prompt mental health treatment ensures that children receive the support they need as soon as possible. This helps address any immediate psychological distress and prevents the escalation of symptoms or mitigates the development of more complex mental health issues later on.

*Possible reduction of long-term effects:* Traumatic experiences can have long-lasting effects on a child's mental health if left untreated. Expedited treatment can help mitigate the impact of trauma, minimize the risk of developing chronic mental health conditions, and promote resilience and recovery.

*Symptom management:* Trauma can lead to a variety of emotional and behavioral symptoms such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep disturbances, and difficulties in social interactions. Early mental health intervention can assist in managing these symptoms effectively and promoting healthy coping strategies.

*Improved academic performance:* Trauma can significantly impact a child's academic performance and overall functioning. By addressing mental health concerns promptly, children are better equipped to focus on their studies, improve concentration, and enhance their overall educational experience.

*Enhanced social and emotional well-being:* Expedited mental health treatment aims to provide children with the necessary tools and strategies to navigate their emotions, build resilience, and develop healthy relationships. This can lead to improved social skills, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

*Family support and involvement:* Children's mental health treatment often involves engaging the entire family system. Expedited treatment allows for the early involvement of parents or caregivers, providing them with guidance, education, and support to understand their child's needs and facilitate their healing process.

*Prevention of future difficulties:* Early intervention can help prevent the development of additional mental health challenges, such as substance abuse, self-harm, or difficulties in interpersonal relationships. By

addressing trauma-related concerns promptly, children are more likely to develop healthy coping mechanisms and reduce the risk of long-term negative outcomes.

*Better overall health:* Trauma and abuse can have a negative impact on physical health, including increased risk of chronic diseases. Addressing mental health problems through expedited access to mental health resources can improve overall health outcomes for youth.

*Cost-effectiveness:* Addressing mental health concerns in the early stages can potentially reduce the long-term financial burden associated with untreated trauma. By preventing the exacerbation of symptoms and the need for more intensive interventions later on, expedited mental health treatment can be more cost-effective in the long run.

Overall, parents and guardians report to ACL that their children are less depressed, angry, and impulsive, and are able to self-regulate. One of the biggest concerns being addressed is preventing the use of drugs or alcohol to escape psychological pain. With mental health support, guidance counselors reported improved scholastics and interpersonal relationships at school. Children and youth report fewer impulsive behaviors, lessened desire to self-harm, and most importantly, self-medicate.

Most importantly, we hear from the children themselves - self-reporting that they are less depressed, have stopped self-harming, are no longer engaging in altercations at home, and have discontinued using substances to relieve psychological pain. Participants indicate feeling empowered, that negative feelings have been replaced with feelings of hope for the future, report excitement at attempting new experiences, have begun feeling more in control of their lives, and that they are no longer feeling shame at what was done to them.

The communities where the clients reside also experience a positive impact. Therapy helps inform life skills such as anger management, impulse control, and emotional intelligence. Studies show that with treatment, children and youth remain in school, have less contact with law enforcement, make healthier life choices, are more able to visualize future success, and are motivated to attempt new challenges and engage in healthy life choices.

These positive outcomes promote healthy communities and direct individuals experiencing trauma/abuse away from incarceration, medical disability, inability to hold a job, hospitalization for substance abuse, and homelessness. This ultimately produces significant savings at local, state, and federal levels. ACL is investing in our children and putting them and our community, on a path towards a healthier and more stable future.

#### **Funding Request:**

***ACL requests a grant of \$7,500 to provide 100 mental health treatment sessions to children as they seek to heal from abuse, trauma, or neglect and regain positive momentum in their lives.***

Chester County, like every county across the United States, is experiencing unprecedented challenges in providing mental health services for the children who need it most. Post Covid-19 we have seen these struggles magnified with a spike in emergency room visits for children experiencing mental health crises. There is a tremendous need for early interventions and support that is accessible to all, regardless of the ability to pay. Each session costs ACL approximately \$75 each and therefore, a grant in the amount of \$7,500 would provide 100 mental health treatment sessions to children as they seek to heal from abuse, trauma, or neglect and regain positive momentum in their lives.

*Thank you for considering this request.*