

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

Date 9/5/2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: A Child's Light

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

Phone: 610-405-2968

Website: www.childslight.com

Year Incorporated: 2019

FEIN: 81-1896477

ED/CEO Name: Leslie Holt

ED/CEO E-mail: Leslie.Holt@childslight.com

Board Chair Name: Harini Balachandar

Board Chair Approval (check here):

Primary Contact Name: Leslie Holt

Primary Contact E-mail: Leslie.Holt@childslight.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities

Environment/Animal Welfare

Education

Health

Human Services

Religion

Mission: A Child's Light provides expedited mental health treatment to children ages 2-18 who are recovering from severe trauma and abuse.

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

ACL serves children throughout all of Chester County and parts of Montgomery County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: ACL serves at least 50 children and youth each year. The children served have suffered child abuse, victimization, severe trauma, trafficking, and sexual assaults.

Annual Budget \$ 190,550 # 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, Bluebeards for Charity, United Way of CC

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: \$ 2,400

Proposal Summary: A Child's Light is poised to grow impact and to do so is looking to increase revenue through diverse fundraising activities. In 2024-2025, the organization is utilizing the support of Lisa Slawinski, to develop a fundraising database and initiate an individual donor fundraising strategy which will build a foundation for sustainable development.



Grant Narrative 2024 – The Chester County Community Foundation

Capacity Building – Fundraising Support

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. The organization has developed a network of over 80 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.

ACL has experienced tremendous growth over the past several years 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.

To date, the organization has funded mental health treatment for more than 160 children and expects that number to continue to grow throughout 2024 and beyond. Additionally, ACL remains the top-of-mind resource in the region and partners with a vast array of social service organizations and agencies to receive referrals from not only case managers, but also school guidance counselors, law enforcement, and more. ACL

has become a recognized source of support when a child has no other timely path toward mental health services. In 2023, ACL worked with Friends Association, Maternal Child Health Consortium, Community Volunteers in Medicine, Domestic Violence Center, La Comunidad Hispana, The Garage, the CCIU, every school district in the county, GrandFamilies of Chester County, Young Moms, among others. Additionally, ACL was asked to work directly with the Coatesville Police Department to pilot a new diversionary program for children who are in need of mental health interventions after experiencing trauma or abuse.

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, studies show that expedited mental health treatment for children following trauma can provide numerous benefits and support their overall well-being. For women and girls, experiences of gender-based violence, sexual assault, rape, child abuse, and more, have a profound impact on overall life outcomes.

Traumatic experiences can have long-lasting effects if left untreated. Prompt mental health treatment helps to address any immediate psychological distress, prevents the escalation of symptoms, mitigates the development of more complex mental health issues, and promotes resilience and recovery.

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. It can also help prevent issues such as substance abuse, self-harm, or difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Learning to develop healthy relationships leads to improved social skills, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

Trauma can also significantly impact a child's academic performance and overall functioning. Children accessing mental health treatment are better equipped to focus on their studies, improve concentration, and enhance their overall educational experience.

Lastly, children's mental health treatment often involves engaging the entire family system. The early involvement of parents or caregivers provides them with guidance, education, and support to understand their child's needs and facilitate their healing process. 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.

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 \$2,400 to support fundraising capacity-building initiatives.

ACL is growing and currently has only one employee, founder Leslie Holt. An active Board of Directors and volunteers supplement, however, the organization is in need of fundraising support and strategy. Currently, grant and foundation support make up a large portion of donated revenue, with a small percentage coming from individual donations. This presents a unique opportunity for growth. ACL aims to develop an individual giving strategy comprised of mailed appeals, social media and online giving campaigns, and additional outreach. The fundraising platform GiveButter was installed as a way for donors to give via the website and as a donor database for ACL. Lisa Slawinski has been assisting ACL with freelance work at \$30 an hour to develop the database, import contacts, and facilitate campaigns. The grant will support 80 hours of work. With that time allotment, ACL aims to develop an individual giving campaign in spring 2025. Through data management, Lisa will support donor engagement, stewardship, and the execution of the campaign (format TBD – online or mailed). Lisa's resume is attached. She has many years of experience with data management and fundraising in Chester County including places like the Chester County Community Foundation, Chester County Food Bank, and CVIM. The impact of this project will be measured by the results of the campaign, growth in individual donors and the increase in direct public support. The anticipated timeline for the activity is February – April 2025. Lisa will work independently, with an estimate of 10 hours a week for 8 weeks. As ACL grows, it is utilizing targeting resources and freelance support to raise funds and awareness about the important work being done in the county.

Thank you for considering this request.

**ACL does not have a current strategic plan. Funding has not been available to date to accomplish this, however, in 2024 ACL initiated a relationship with RSVP. VEC volunteers are currently working with the Board of Directors and staff to establish best practices at a Board level and next will begin work on developing a Strategic Plan. ACL looks forward to providing you with the plan when it is complete.