

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

Contact Information

Organization Name: Half a Million Kids 501c3
Address: 944 Providence Rd
Phone: 484-994-8408
Website: halfamillionkids.org
Year Incorporated: 2015
FEIN: 81-0705219

Date November 10, 2024

ED/CEO Name: Leah Stauffer
ED/CEO E-mail: leah@halfamillionkids.org
Board Chair Name: Leah Stauffer
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Carly Smith
Primary Contact E-mail: carly@halfamillionkids.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest: Human Services

Mission: Our mission is to place every child eligible for adoption into a safe, permanent, loving home through our results based 3- Phase Plan. We intend to return foster care to its original purpose, a short-term safety net for kids awaiting reunification with their birth family or another permanency outcome. We aim to support caseworkers and revolutionize the group home setting for those children who need to remain in foster care. We started with a commitment to foster children and have come to learn of the intersection of these children with the child sex trafficking industry. We have integrated into our mission a commitment to end child sex trafficking born out of the child welfare system and will blunt one of the major pipelines for traffickers and keep these children safe.

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

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: The population served will be the approximately 78 foster children of Chester County, 32 of which 32 children are eligible for adoption. (Source)

Annual Budget \$376,000 2 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

66 % of budget for program expenses 5 # of Board Volunteers

26 % of budget for administrative expenses 4 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

8 % of budget for fundraising expenses 30+ # of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Private Foundation, Costco, Individual Donors

Is this grant proposal for: General Operating

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$7500

Proposal Summary: Our 3-Phase Plan focuses on our Pilot Region in the 6 county Philadelphia Region with emphasis on Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Bucks, Philadelphia and Berks Counties. In Chester County alone, there are 78 children in foster care and 32 of them are eligible for adoption (41%) meaning the parental rights have been terminated and these children are never going home. (source). Our Plan consists of *Phase 1*, a Multi-Media Awareness and Recruitment Campaign to attract more families/individuals to foster and adopt. These leads will be referred to vetted agencies. We are documenting a replicable model and running a celebrity driven national campaign to attract leaders in other cities to duplicate what was achieved in Philadelphia. In *Phase 2* we empower the role of the social worker to have a more proactive and preventative approach rather than the current reactive strategy that is required due to systemic breakdowns through our Bridge Program. We work with families to shepherd them through the complex adoption process and as a resource for the caseworkers. We support social workers working with the families prior to kids being removed from the home. *Phase 3* reimagines and revolutionizes the group home setting for those that truly need to be in foster care as they await reunification with their family. We have identified a successful House Parent Model acknowledged by Governor Shapiro where foster kids are thriving rather than jumping from home to home, oftentimes 10 or more times by the age 12 or living in institutional type facilities. By scaling this successful model, foster children will get the best of congregate care and a family setting.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

Born into the foster care system and adopted by amazing parents at 4 months old, our Founder, Leah is keenly aware that the trajectory of her life could have gone quite differently. She could have easily become a statistic. Her passion for helping foster children based on her lived experience, inspired her to establish Half a Million Kids 501c3 in 2015. However, she has been part of the foster community for much longer, assisting agencies in providing merchandise and tickets for activities and concerts for foster kids. In 2020, she started building a team of volunteers to help forward our mission as we awaited funding. During this time, we have established partnerships with agencies, local and state governments and other stakeholders who collaborate with us to reach our mission.

Our overarching goal and vision is a world where all children have a loving family and are safe. Foster children are historically underserved and lost in the system facing a multitude of challenges compared to the general population, such as PTSD, abuse, neglect, teen pregnancy, overprescribed medications, incarceration, homelessness, substance abuse problems and being sex trafficked. Getting the children eligible for adoption into loving homes can positively change the trajectory of their lives, both individually and generationally, impact the lives of the families that adopt them and improve society as a whole by decreasing the impact and cost to society. When foster children are adopted, they have the opportunity to thrive, mentally, physically, emotionally and increase the opportunities for their future including good health and mental health care, enrolling in a better school system, going to college or other trade school, getting married and having a family and creating new generational opportunities for their children. We see a world where children are safe and happy with opportunities for a bright future, where they are loved and supported in a forever family.

We have already reached key achievements with our small charity. HMK has been able to make multiple connections to collaborate with organizations with shared values and missions to help foster children. First, we are currently collaborating with a Tech Company that has a functioning matching tech in other states getting great results. We are in conversation with the state of Pennsylvania to adopt and implement their tech while we also develop our own Matching Tech 2.0 as an additional resource. Next, we are running our Bridge Program, assisting families through the complex adoption process. In addition, we have identified a House Parent Model in Montgomery County that has been acknowledged by the Governor of Pennsylvania as well as has been featured nationally and have partnered with them to begin our Phase 3; Revolutionizing the Group Home. We have begun the process of scaling their model with more homes in Montgomery, yet also helping them expand into other counties, particularly in Chester County. We have engaged real estate investors that are interested in our mission and expanding these homes for foster kids.

Half a Million Kids is distinct from other organizations because we provide a very collaborative spirit of Collective Impact. The importance of working with other organizations leads to bigger success. Many organizations provide similar services yet they all work in silos. Our approach is actually one of connectedness by not only bringing organizations with shared missions into our orbit, it is also about connecting those organizations with each other. This has led to multiple partnerships that are working for the good of foster children in Pennsylvania.

Description of key initiatives

Our 3-Phase Plan focuses on our Pilot Region in the 6 county Philadelphia Region with emphasis on Chester, Montgomery, Bucks, Berks, Delaware and Philadelphia Counties.

Phase 1 is a Multi-Media Awareness and Recruitment Campaign to attract enough families to adopt these foster children eligible for adoption and refer them to vetted agencies.

Phase 2 is about empowering the Social Worker through our Bridge Program and Matching Tech. Caseworkers are stressed out, burnt out and overworked. The Matching Tech will create a more efficient matching experience for all stakeholders involved and improve the numbers of children getting adopted more quickly. The Matching Tech is the transformative piece of the equation nationwide. Additionally, our Bridge Program will also be a resource to help navigate families/individuals through the complex adoption process while working with case workers and agencies to help where needed.

Phase 3 is revolutionizing the Group Home which will provide foster children awaiting reunification with a better home life experience. Many foster children are in residential institutions that do not provide the care and safety these children need. As mentioned, we have identified a House Parent Model in Montgomery County that has been acknowledged by the Governor of Pennsylvania through the Award of Excellence as well as has been featured nationally. We have already begun the process to scale this model to expand into Chester County as well as other counties within our Pilot Region.

Specific needs & issues to be addressed and why is it important to fund this now?

Roughly 25% of children in foster care are eligible for adoption nationally, meaning their parental rights have been terminated and they are never going home. ([Congressional Coalition Adoption Institute](#)) Our mission and primary objective is to place every child eligible for adoption into a safe, permanent, loving home through our results based 3-Phase Plan as well as slow down the rate at which children enter the system. Children in foster care are an underserved community and those eligible for adoption are stuck in the system and are often forgotten. At 18, these kids will age out of the system and 50% will end up homeless, incarcerated, with substance abuse issues, or government dependent creating a generational problem. ([Congressional Coalition for Adoption Institute](#)). Foster children that have aged out of the system are diagnosed twice as often with PTSD than veterans, contributing to the growing mental health issues society is facing. ([Casey Family Programs](#)). These statistics fuel the continuous cycle of poverty for these children.

Another serious issue foster children face on a much larger scale than children in the general population is mental health issues. The cost to the government and community aside, the lack of mental health treatment resources available for these children set them up for a lifetime of health problems. "Up to [80 percent](#) of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared to approximately [18-22 percent](#) of the general population. As a result of these increased mental health issues, [foster youth are prescribed psychotropic medications at a much higher rate](#) than non-foster youth, costing the state, through fee-for-service programs such as Medicaid, millions of dollars a year. The American Academy of Pediatrics, [Healthy Foster Care American Initiative](#), identifies mental and behavioral health as the "greatest unmet health need for children and teens in foster care." ([National Conference of State Legislatures](#)) These statistics are astounding and they are perpetuating generation after generation of our most vulnerable kids. By addressing these foster children in the system, focusing on getting them adopted, we can improve the lives of thousands of children. Studies show that the support and love of adoption can help change the direction of these children's lives forever. We cannot let this cycle of pain and poverty continue for these kids.

How impact & results will be demonstrated

The foundation of our 3 Phase Plan is complete and we have been able to soft launch our Programs with an all volunteer staff. To be more effective and launch our programs completely, hiring the right, passionate people is imperative. We have recruited our team, many of whom are volunteering at the moment, yet they are anxiously waiting in the wings to be able to join us full-time upon funding.

Given our mission to help get every child eligible for adoption out of the foster care system and into loving homes, everything we do and every decision we make is ultimately about the kids. However, in our journey to help these children find forever homes, we have discovered that we must also account for the families/individuals who want to adopt these special children as well as other stakeholders including agencies, caseworkers, group homes, partner organizations and the government agencies in charge of foster and adoption. While our ultimate beneficiary are the children, all stakeholders have a role in our work for the well being of these children. We improve on existing efforts by collaborating with other stakeholders, such as agencies, caseworkers, partner organizations, government agencies, schools, etc to learn more about breakdowns and challenges they experience within the system that we can create solutions for. The seeds of our program have been planted and with funding those seeds will blossom to fruition to help this vulnerable population. The impact of funding to implement our 3 Phase Plan will be immense through foster children getting adopted quicker into loving homes, finding families through our multi-media campaign and opening homes based on the House Parent Model while kids are awaiting reunification.

We will be tracking our results for The Bridge Program by the following statistics: Vetting Agencies - # of agencies active, # of agencies vetted, # of agencies participating, # of families/individuals in The Bridge Program, # of families/individuals referred to agencies, # of kids matched to families/individuals in The Bridge Program. The Matching App will have similar criteria; # of agencies participating, # / % of children entered into the app, # of algorithmic matches (children with families), # of actual matches (children with families), # of kids participating. For Phase 3 we will be tracking the 4 homes at 8 children in each home, # of children that come through the homes, age out and the # of new children come in and the completed scaling and training manual for Phase 3.

Reporting for this tracking will give us the data needed to make improvements and updates as needed. It will also show results to our ultimate mission and goal of getting kids adopted. The success of The Bridge Program in Philadelphia will provide us with a replicable model that will attract leaders in other cities, counties and states nationwide. The success of the Beta launch of the app will provide us with the necessary data to distribute the app nationwide.