

Request for Proposal Winners

The President's Initiative on Children, Youth and Families (PICYF) recently completed reviews of nearly 60 proposals submitted in response to its Request for Proposals entitled "**Disparities: Unequal Opportunities, Unequal Outcomes.**" This granting program, administered through the Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC) which houses PICYF, is intended to seed small projects that will promote understanding of or examine ways to effectively address disparities, broadly defined, among Minnesota's children, youth and families. This program provides funds with the expectation and hope that this seed money will be leveraged to obtain additional resources, create impact in communities, enhance visibility of important children, youth or family issues, and build partnerships. PICYF was able to fund seven projects, ranging in cost from \$3500 to \$7500. We believe that the seven projects selected reflect the breadth and depth of issues that PICYF and CYFC seek to address. And we are confident that these projects will make a significant contribution to this important area of work.

The seven grantees are:

- **Jessica Berge, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health:**

Parenting Partnerships is a community-University initiative at the Broadway Family Medicine outpatient clinic in North Minneapolis. This project originated when concerned parents at the Broadway clinic asked for parenting classes to help reduce violence, drug/alcohol, and mental health problems in their children. The parenting classes are facilitated by a multidisciplinary team, including marriage and family therapists (MFTs) and family practice residents. The parenting classes are offered to all parents who attend the Broadway clinic. The parenting classes include four elements: (a) parent training (1 ½ hours each time), (b) child care with skills training for the participants' children, (c) a meal together, and (d) an opportunity to mentor other parents in the community regarding parenting skills after completion of the parenting classes. The classes will run for 10 weeks. Four sequences of classes will be offered over the one year grant period. Data will be collected for the duration of the grant that will measure: (1) parenting stress (measured by the parenting stress index; PSI), (2) child misbehavior (including violence), mental health problems, drug/alcohol use, somatic symptoms, and interpersonal distress (measured by the Youth Outcome Questionnaire; Y-OQ), (3) family functioning (measured by the Family Adjustment Device; FAD), and (4) marital distress (measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale; DAS).

- **James Boulger, Center for Rural Mental Health Studies, UMD:**

The Center for Rural Mental Health Studies (*CRMHS*) is a multidisciplinary mental health professional group committed to developing initiatives in mental health care that are appropriate for rural settings. It is well-documented that people living in rural areas often lack access to mental health services and rely on their family physicians to meet their mental health needs. This process results in frustration for both the patient, who may require more intense mental health care, and for physicians who lack access to immediate referral sources.

To meet this need the CRMHS began in 2003 to provide rural Minnesota residents with access to mental health services via interactive video (termed telemental health). To date the Center has formed a telemental health network with five rural primary health care clinics in

Minnesota (Scenic River Health Services located in both Cook and Bigfork, the Littlefork Medical Center, the Paynesville Area Medical Clinic, and the Duluth Clinic - Ely) to provide mental health services to these underserved rural populations.

The staff of the CRMHS have been asked to provide telemental health services in various other rural locations throughout Minnesota. Currently, the CRMHS feels it is in a position to expand and will provide telemental health services to the families and youth seeking treatment at the Allina - Mora Medical Clinic. Mora Minnesota currently has no primary mental health providers. The grant award from the President's Initiative on Children, Youth & Families will allow the CRMHS this expansion.

• **Cynthia Cattell, School of Physics and Astronomy:**

PACES, "Parents and Children Experiencing Science", is a program designed to promote science education in under-represented communities in a format where parents model learning for their children. This format allows young children (pre-k through 3rd grade) to see their own parent valuing an educational experience and finding that science is fun and exciting. The goal is to insure that the parent and child will view themselves as confident co-learners of science. Short courses (45 – 60 minutes) promote critical thinking for both the parent and the child in a non-threatening format. The emphasis is on parents and children jointly making observations and generating questions. It is intended to be a format where parents model the curiosity, focused involvement and enjoyment of learning.

The program is mobile. All materials and teachers go to the communities where parents and children can be brought together.

There are several long term goals of this program:

- To help parents view themselves as an integral part of the learning experiences of their children.
- To provide academic opportunities for young children and parents.
- To help build stronger student attachment to schools and learning experiences.

PACES focuses on communities that are economically disadvantaged and exhibiting the greatest disparities in academic achievement among their students.

• **Carolyn Garcia, School of Nursing:**

Despite availability and existence of Latino-serving health and social service agencies in the Twin Cities, reduction of health disparities and improved health of Latino youth/families has been modest. The goal of this new and developing University-community collaborative is to eliminate health disparities and simultaneously promote healthy Latino youth development. We see this occurring as a result of combining research with strategic systems-level planning that looks beyond individual organizational impact to a future of integrated comprehensive delivery of evidence-based, culturally meaningful clinic-, community-, and school-based services.

We intend to hold a one-day Healthy Latino Youth Development Summit in the Twin Cities bringing together invited representatives of community organizations and university departments concerned with the health disparities experienced by Latino youth and their families. The purpose of the Summit is to accomplish strategic grant and system-level planning and dialogue through an intensive one-day facilitated process. This Summit will serve as a launching point upon which collective ideas can translate into strategic initiatives including system-level change

in how health disparities are addressed, healthy Latino youth development is promoted, and federal grants are collaboratively sought.

The goals of the Summit are to:

1. Generate increased focus on health disparities for Latino youth and their families
2. Develop a strategic plan that identifies ways in which participating organizations can collectively make changes that will have an effect on health disparities
3. Develop a participatory research agenda to support improved understanding of health disparities and promotion of healthy development for Latino youth in Minnesota
4. Develop a collaborative partnership between the community organizations and University researchers that can be sustained over at least the next 5 years resulting in successful applications for federal or large foundation grants.

• **Nicole La Voi, Tucker Center on Girls and Sports:**

Youth sports can provide a positive, meaningful context for youth development and family engagement through a sense of belonging and connection to community and civic life, and an appreciation for the importance of working together with diverse groups of people to achieve success. All of these well-documented benefits can translate into the classroom and into adult lifestyles in an ethnically and religiously pluralistic society in ways that foster academic achievement, and long-term physical, emotional and social well being. However, the influence can be negative due to such things as a hostile sport climate or poorly trained coaches, or may also be minimal or non-existent, as many barriers prevent some children from engaging in youth sport altogether — resulting in disparate child outcomes. The primary goal of this project is to forge new connections and create synergy among U of M researchers, the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) and community members and leaders in Minneapolis in order to identify challenges and barriers that prevent or limit children of diverse ethnic backgrounds from participating in youth soccer. Soccer is currently one of the fastest growing and most recognized sports worldwide, and the MYSA is “the” recreational and travel level soccer provider in the state. Focus groups acting as “informants” will discuss their “situated knowledge”, experiences, perceptions and ideas for making soccer more accessible and equitable. In addition, participants will discuss how to create a more tolerant climate that will in sum help in the formation of policy and programmatic recommendations.

• **Kent Pekel, Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success:**

The University’s Consortium for Postsecondary Academic Success will sponsor a Minnesota College Access Summit on May 18, 2007, in partnership with the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP). Additional funding for the summit is being provided by the 3M Foundation. The objective of the Minnesota College Access Summit is to address disparities in rates of enrollment in and graduation from institutions of higher education by bringing together a diverse group of community organizations, schools, districts and institutions of higher education to launch the Minnesota College Access Network (MCAN). This important new organization will provide ongoing coordination of and support for college access programs across the state. Participants in the summit will also gain an understanding of the disparities in preparation for and access to higher education that exist in Minnesota along racial, socioeconomic and linguistic lines and effective strategies for reducing those disparities. The Summit will feature a keynote address, an update on the state of college access programming in Minnesota and around the nation and breakout sessions that focus on key aspects of preparing all students for

postsecondary academic success.

- **Esther Wattenberg, School of Social Work:**

“Addressing the Best Interests of the Child in Immigrant and Refugee Families” is a state-wide forum to be held during the fall semester, 2008, to discuss findings from an exploratory study of child welfare issues in immigrant families. This event will provide a forum to discuss practice and policy issues in protecting the best interests of children in families whose culture, immigrant experiences, and uncertain legal status create a complex family environment for child welfare decisions. The focus of attention will be seven rural counties that have been identified as having a recent upsurge of Hispanic, Somali, and Southeast Asian families. One of the major issues to be addressed is the family’s reluctance to access and respond to services when child protection issues are reported. The extent to which an overburdened and under-funded rural child welfare staff can respond to this population of underserved children, when parents’ immigration status is uncertain, will be addressed. These issues will also be especially relevant to the health and education systems.

In preparation for this state-wide meeting, a network of University resources and community agencies interested in child welfare issues of immigrant and refugee families will be invited to a consultative luncheon to review findings from the DHS study. This network will include: Public Health; Family Social Science; College of Education and Human Development; Institute of Child Welfare; Law School; and School of Social Work.

Findings from the Minnesota Department of Human Services-funded exploratory study and proceedings from the state conference, above, will provide the requisite data to develop a federally-funded project on protecting children in immigrant families.

We look forward to following the progress of these projects and advancing our collective understanding of how to reduce the disparities that compromise the health and well-being of so many children and families today.