

A Proposal to Provide Educational, Disability and Psychological Consultation Services to TANF Service Providers

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one of every seven people-- 15% of the general population-- has barriers to learning ability and vocational potential that are imposed by learning disabilities. An additional 16% or more of the general population have low or below average cognitive abilities that place them at risk for job and academic failure, especially when the goals they have set are unrealistic or unobtainable. Among the populations served by social services agencies, these proportions of people with learning problems, hidden disabilities and/or low cognitive potential have been estimated to be much higher (1990 U.S. Census; American Council on Higher Education; National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center). Thirty to forty percent of Level II and III TANF participants are likely to have significant barriers to their employment imposed by mental or learning problems. The goal of this proposal to provide consultation services to TANF service providers to help them serve these populations that fall within our practice's particular areas of specialty and expertise.

Our goal in this proposal is to become a readily available resource about special needs clients specifically for their service providers. A second proposal to provide direct specialized instruction, self esteem building activities and psychological and psycho-educational evaluations to TANF participants has been submitted under separate cover, as required by the RFP for Fee for Service Programs.

Overview of the Proposed Services:

- I Evaluation of the cognitive/vocational potential and barriers that might affect job training, acquisition and retention of TANF participants. (Fee for Service: separately submitted proposal))*
- II Self esteem building activities for persons who are high risk and/or who have disabilities. (Fee for Service: separately submitted proposal))*
- III Specialized instruction of vocational and pre-vocational skills. (Fee for Service: separately submitted proposal))*
- IV Educational, disability and psychological consultation services for tanf service providers. (Fixed Cost: this proposal)**

Experience and Staffing of Lifelong Adult Education Services, Inc.:

Lifelong AES, Inc. is a private educational and psychological practice that is centrally located within the Lincoln Park Enterprise Community and easily accessible from all parts of the Denver Metro area. The majority of individual clients who are referred to Lifelong fall into one or more high risk groups. They have disabilities and are often in low income brackets. Many clients are participants in social welfare programs, receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) due to their physical, mental or learning disabilities. Seventy percent of our clients are referred by public agencies. Corporate and institutional clients who have contracted with us to provide disability (ADA) or learning disability consultation services include college and university disability programs (e.g., University of Denver), private business concerns with in-house literacy and training programs (e.g. Lucent Technologies) and national organizations that have a need for consultation regarding disability documentation and/or policy (e.g., the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners, the Learning Disability Association of Colorado).

The owner of Lifelong Adult Education Services, Inc. is Mary Costa, M.A. Since 1980, Ms. Costa has been a program coordinator and instructor for adult education and postsecondary institutions including the Community College of Denver in Denver, Colorado, and the University of the Americas and the National Autonomous University in Mexico City. Mary is the Director of Educational Services at Lifelong, and under her direction, Lifelong currently provides consultation and educational services to Lucent Technologies on both a national and local level, to metro area referral agencies and to private clients.

Gary Macdonald, Ph.D. is the Director of Psychological and Disability Services at Lifelong. Dr. Macdonald previously coordinated the learning disability program at the Community College of Denver and joined Ms. Costa full time at Lifelong in 1996. Dr. Macdonald has provided counseling and both psychological and psycho-educational evaluations to clients from a wide variety of referral agencies and individuals along the entire front range of Colorado. He is widely recognized as an expert in adult learning problems and disabilities and, since 1985, has provided both psychological and disability consultation services to both local and national organizations.

Staffing patterns at Lifelong vary with the schedules of the systems and clients to whom we provide instructional, counseling, consultation and evaluation services. Personnel are hired on an as-needed basis and are always highly skilled in their areas of expertise. We have a large pool of talented educators and psychologists from which to choose. All applicants must show successful experience working with adults who have learning problems, and tolerance for their cultural diversity and individual differences.

Target Population and Job Readiness Levels to be Served:

The targets of the consultation services set forth in this proposal are the service providers who work directly for DDSS or who are contracted by the DDSS to provide services to TANF clients. Indirect service provision supports other services to TANF clients in Levels II & III in cases where educational, psychological or ADA concerns are raised.

Recruitment and Referral of TANF Participants:

Aggressive marketing and personal contact with the service providers will be necessary to establish a referral base for this service. This includes all educational, vocational and psychological service providers in addition to the TANF case managers and counselors. Assistance from the TANF administrative staff will be required to ensure that all parties are contacted who would benefit from consultation services.

Multi-cultural Sensitivity:

Equal access, fair treatment and sensitivity to the issues confronting those who come from differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds is a high priority within our organization. Lifelong values the diverse nature of the cultures that make up our society. We have staff who are bilingual, have spent substantial time in other countries, have been trained to recognize sensitive cultural components that influence processes and relationships, and are experienced at fostering positive multi-cultural experiences.

Key Concepts and Strategies of the Proposed Consultation Services:

Educational, disability and psychological consultation services for TANF service providers.

- A. Educational Consultation
- B. ADA Consultation
- C. Psychological Consultation
- D. Other Consultation Services

It has been our experience that service providers have the most difficulty in planning and implementing their services for populations that contain people with multiple needs and special concerns beyond their areas of expertise. We are regularly asked questions about the nature of learning disabilities or other problems that have an impact on learning, training and job performance, the individual needs of clients with these difficulties, and ways to accommodate clients with disabilities. There are few public resources or agencies that have an adequate grasp of the special needs of these clients, and fewer still who can provide the guidance and constructive criticism necessary to help the service providers perform their jobs most effectively with this group. This Fixed Cost service provides for the needs of service providers enabling them to more effectively plan and provide for this highest risk and highest cost sub-population of TANF participants.

Educational Consultation: Individuals with special needs present an ongoing concern for the service providers who work with them in educational and training environments. Service providers who focus on adult needs often have no one of whom they can ask basic questions so they can prevent the imminent failures of their clients and students. This results in special needs clients falling through the cracks as they are shoved to the side while instructors and trainers work with the “easier” students.

The goal of this type of consultative service is to intervene *before* failures occur in adult settings. Consultation services for instructors and trainers regarding the specific needs and learning styles of their clients are often necessary, but remarkably are absent from adult settings. In contrast, such consultation services in child settings are a state and federal requirement. Lifelong participation at planning meetings and staffings for clients whose needs demand a team approach also fits under this type of consultation services.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Consultation: Trainers, supervisors, employers, and educational professionals are often confused about how to implement the spirit of the ADA guidelines when they have people with disabilities in their midst. These service providers have questions regarding when they should implement accommodations, what accommodations are most appropriate, and who needs an accommodation among their clientele. Even sophisticated training and vocational rehabilitation systems have great difficulty implementing the requirements of the ADA in their own settings, and at times, show a surprising lack of understanding for the needs of their clients.

Most accommodations for people with disabilities are obvious, simple to implement, and inexpensive. Accommodations for people with hidden disabilities (such as learning disabilities, mental illnesses and brain injuries), however, can be much more difficult to determine because their needs are not so readily apparent. Very often, these individuals themselves do not know what they need to succeed. In turn, service providers are left guessing at their clients needs and accommodations, usually by trial and error processes.

Many of the estimated 30% of TANF clients in Levels II and III may have in the past failed to hold a job or dropped out of training programs due to unrecognized and unaccommodated hidden disabilities. Our ADA consultation services for TANF participants will prevent these individuals from continuing to fail at work or in their educational efforts due to the hidden disabilities that mask their real needs. On-site observations, review of disability documentation, and collaborative problem solving among the service providers and affected individuals are the primary activities of ADA consultation.

Psychological Consultation: This area of consultation services includes helping service providers to understand the cognitive limitations of their clients, to deal with their behaviorally difficult clients, to understand the test results they have obtained from other systems

or providers, and to develop a better understanding of their own limitations in working with difficult clients. Lifelong participation at planning meetings and staffings for clients whose needs demand a team approach also fits under this type of consultation services.

Other Consultative Roles: Lifelong staff members have expertise in a number of other areas that may be exploited under this proposal. Inservice training on such topics as learning disabilities, sensitivity training, mental illnesses or other specific areas of concern to service providers are available by request. We also have particular expertise in testing and screening for learning problems that TANF administrators and counselors may want to access.

Collaborative Partnerships with Other TANF Service Providers:

Consultation services are, by definition, provided from within a context of collaboration and cooperation with others. The essence of the consultative relationship is in its ability to promote collaborative efforts among service providers on behalf of TANF participants in any location or context.

Record Keeping and Program Outcomes:

The success of our consultation services will ultimately be determined by the number of TANF participants who have moved into the workplace and retained their jobs despite their hidden disabilities or learning problems. Logs of time spent with each provider will be kept. If 80% or higher of the allotted hours are used, we will consider ourselves highly successful during the first year. If 50% to 80% of hours are used we will consider ourselves to be moderately successful. If below 50% of the hours allotted for consultation services are used, we would not consider ourselves to have successfully implemented this program. Feedback via written evaluation and survey forms will be solicited from each program or individual receiving consultation. This data will be reported to the TANF administration at the designated reporting periods according to DDSS specifications.

Cost of Program Implementation:

Given adequate marketing, we anticipate that at least 200 hours of consultative services will be provided each year. Total program cost is \$12,500 per year for up to 250 hours of consultation services to TANF service providers. This amounts to only about 1% of the TANF funds available under this RFP to serve the needs of 30% or more of the total population. There are no significant administrative costs involved as the product is primarily intellectual and hands-on.

Summary:

Resources available to TANF service providers and case managers are limited in the Denver Metro area. Individuals with special needs present an ongoing concern for service

providers in educational and training environments. Our ADA consultation services for TANF participants will prevent them from continuing to fail at work or in their educational efforts due to hidden disabilities that mask their real needs. Psychological consultation services include helping service providers to understand the cognitive limitations of their clients, deal with their behaviorally difficult clients, understand the test results they have obtained from other systems or providers, and develop a better understanding of their own limitations in working with difficult clients.

Difficult questions regarding the special needs of clients with disabilities, learning problems, and psychological difficulties constantly arise among those who work with populations in high-risk populations. Our consultation services are intended to help TANF service providers by providing them with answers, suggestions and support for the difficulties they may have in planning for and following-up with their clients.