**Teen Support Group Expansion and Training**

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| From: Mental Health Support | Author: Laura Mihelich |
| To: Community Foundation | Funding Request: $4,921 |

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**Introduction**

Over 40 million people in the US experience mental illness each year and suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Stigma and lack of outreach make it difficult for those struggling to find appropriate treatment. Access to regular support groups could help remove some of these barriers, offering a place for adolescents to find resources and speak openly about their struggles.

Recently, Mental Health Support (MHS), a Northern Illinois based mental health support organization, acquired a small support group service program entitled Hope Now. Hope Now offers facilitator-lead support groups for adults weekly, as well as teen support groups every other week, in Winnebago County. MHS would like to expand their teen support group offerings to twice weekly and increase the reach of these programs to additional counties served by MHS.

**Program Need**

There is considerable need for adolescent mental health services in Northern Illinois’ Winnebago, Boone, and Stephenson counties, starting with increased access to support groups.

Studies provide evidence that participation in support groups has direct and indirect benefits on quality of life and symptom reduction and is effective in enhancing social networks that improve support. *(Insert study evidence here.)* Furthermore, increased communication about mental health can help fight stigma surrounding mental illness and help attendees find further support and resources.

In 2016, the Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee found that mental health stigma still is a major issue in the region and wait lists for pediatric/adolescent mental health services are exceptionally long.

Furthermore, according to NAMI, 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experiences a mental health disorder each year. The population base for the counties MHS serves is 383,345 (according to the 2010 US Census). By applying these statistics, it can be assumed that approximately 63,890 adolescents in the region experience mental illness in any given year. Increasing Hope Now/MHS support group services by adding locations and timeslots will better serve the magnitude of the need in the region and further MHS mission priorities – education and support.

**About the Organization**

MHS is an Illinois-based mental health support organization serving Winnebago, Boone and Stephenson counties. Members are families, friends, professionals, advocates, and people living with mental illness. Our goal is provide education, offer support and resources, and advocate for those who need assistance.

**Program Overview**

*Goal*

Adolescents in Northern Illinois who are experiencing mental health problems will have access to the support they need to continue their development, build better lives, and reach wellness.

*Objectives*

Implement two weekly teen support groups, available year-round, in Winnebago, Boone, and Stephenson counties by the end of 2020.

70% of surveyed group attendees who regularly participated over a three month period will feel more understood and less stigmatized, helping to bridge-the-gap between therapy and community.

*Strategies/Methods*

* Group facilitators will administer voluntary, anonymous, baseline surveys with teen group attendees to evaluate current group effectiveness – December 2019.
* Executive Director and Board will recruit 4 group facilitator volunteers for Stephenson, Winnebago, and Boone counties (two per county – Winnebago and Boone previously have one facilitator each) – November 2019 – February 2020.
* Executive Director will research group locations for Stephenson County. They will also contact the current support group locations in Winnebago and Boone counties to inquire about increased availability. If unavailable, alternative locations will be researched – February 2020 – April 2020.
* MHS will train four new group facilitators – March 2020 – April 2020.
* Executive Director will reach out to local high schools to advertise teen groups. Schools include Auburn, East, Jefferson, Belvidere, and Freeport. They will also contact churches to place advertisements in weekly bulletins. Churches include St. Peters, St. James, Our Savior’s Lutheran, City First, and Heartland Community Church – May 2020.
* Graphic Design volunteer will create marketing materials – May 2020.
* Executive Director and Digital Marketing volunteer will distribute marketing materials to schools and churches, announce new groups on social media and websites, update online calendars, and email the MHS listserv to spread the word about new support group availability – July 2020.
* Groups officially launch. Facilitators will continue to survey attendees quarterly – August 2020.

**Budget**

MHS is requesting a total of $4,921 to cover training and implementation of this program.

Expenses are as followed:

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| --- | --- |
| **Project/Program Name:** | Support Group Expansion and Training  |
| **Name of applicant organization:**  | Mental Health Support |
|  **PROJECT EXPENSES** |
|  | **Foundation Request** |
|  **Personnel Expenses** |   |
| Executive Director | $1,992  |
| *Personnel Subtotal* | $1,992  |
| Fringe Benefits (13% of salary) | $259  |
|  **Non-Personnel Expenses** |   |
| In Kind SupportSupport Group VolunteersDigital Marketing VolunteerGraphic Design Volunteer | $16,148 ($15,868) ($127) ($153) |
| MHS Support Group Training Courses | $900  |
| Travel | $371  |
| Program Evaluation Supplies | $108  |
| Marketing/Outreach | $542  |
|  **Total Project Expenses** | **$4,172**  |
| **Indirect Costs / Overhead** | **$749**  |
| **Grand Total** | **$4,921**  |

*Budget Narrative*

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| **INCOME** |
| **Item** | **Amount** | **Explanation** |
| Grant | $4,921 | The amount of funding requested. |
| In Kind Support | $16,148.05 | In Kind Support includes volunteers associated with the program. Volunteers include a graphic designer (6 hours), digital marketer (5 hours), and support group facilitators (6 volunteers spending 2 hours a week on support groups, 52 weeks/year). Group facilitators do not need specific mental health education. However, according to MHS guidelines, they should either have experienced a mental illness or have a family member experiencing mental illness. The total estimate for In Kind support is based on the IndependentSector.org estimated National Value of Each Volunteer Hour – $25.43/hour. |
| **EXPENSES** |
| **Item** | **Amount** | **Explanation** |
| Executive Director | $1992.24 | The Executive Director will take charge of recruitment, location securement, outreach, and volunteer management. They will spend an estimated 8% of their yearly hourly income on this project. |
| Fringe Benefits (13% of salary) | $258.99 | Estimate based on the National Compensation Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. |
| In Kind Support | $16,148.05 | In Kind Support includes volunteers associated with the program. Volunteers include a graphic designer (6 hours), digital marketer (5 hours), and support group facilitators (6 volunteers spending 2 hours a week on support groups, 52 weeks/year). Group facilitators do not need specific mental health education. However, according to MHS guidelines, they should either have experienced a mental illness or have a family member experiencing mental illness. The total estimate for In Kind support is based on the IndependentSector.org estimated National Value of Each Volunteer Hour – $25.43/hour. |
| MHS Support Group Training Courses | $900 | Each course has a $225 registration fee. By training 4 volunteer facilitators, the total cost is $900. Training needed because MHS groups are built around structured manuals to ensure fidelity |
| Travel | $371.20 | Signature Program training for MHS is held in Wheaton, IL, about 80 miles from MHS headquarters in Rockford, IL. In order to cover training, MHS will reimburse gas expenses. According to the IRS, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car for business is 58 cents per mile driven. Using these figures, volunteers will spend $92.80 traveling round trip from Rockford, IL to Wheaton, IL. We will reimburse all volunteers attending training. |
| Program Evaluation Supplies | $107.95 | In order to evaluate our teen support groups, we need to conduct surveys. Supplies needed include paper/printing, pens, and clipboards. MHS plans to print 125 survey copies per quarter to be divided amongst groups. The total cost for the year to print 500 black and white copies is $45 at Office Depot. One box of pens for each volunteer (6) will cost a total of $30, and a package of 30 clipboards to use to take surveys on will cost $32.95. |
| Marketing/Outreach | $541.88 | As part of outreach efforts beyond social media. MHS will print flyers to post in 10 regional high schools. MHS will print 10 flyers per school to post around the premises. Printing full color will cost $44 for all 100 prints. Church bulletin advertising costs an average of $10 per unit per week. We would like to have support group advertising appearing in 5 church bulletins once a month for 6 months, totaling $300. Finally, to increase our digital presence, we will sign up for Meetup.com, a site that allows organizers to create local groups. Organizational access to Meetup.com costs $197.88/year. |

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**Program Sustainability**

MHS plans to continue providing ten support group services for adolescents going forward. Once implemented, the program will be self-sustainable, much like our other support groups, as ongoing costs are very low. By having volunteers trained as group facilitators and donated host locations, future costs of the program will only include additional trainings, continued marketing efforts, and replenished survey supplies. Covering these expenses will be included as goals within our yearly fundraising events, which have been very successful in the past, accounting for 48% of our total income in 2018.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation of teen support groups will help MHS ensure positive group development. Our program begins with surveying current attendees to determine group effectiveness and member status. All surveys will be voluntary and anonymous. After the expanded program is established, group facilitators will administer surveys on a quarterly basis in order to maintain quality and ascertain if changes are necessary. Group facilitators will meet to analyze the surveys, reporting any necessary changes back to the MHS executive director. For those participants who have regularly attended groups for three months or more, our goal is to have 70% of those attendees report that they feel better understood and less stigmatized in the local community.