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3. Telephone Number: 773-475-4208

4. Project Title: Lifelong Families

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12. Name of Federal Project Officer: Patricia L. Campiglia

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14. Comments, (if any):
The Children’s Place Association
Lifelong Families Program Progress Report

Program Summary
The Lifelong Families Program at The Children’s Place Association has been designed to provide comprehensive social services to especially high risk families who are affected by HIV/AIDS. Issues such as poor health, lack of safe and stable housing, poor nutritional and educational resources, and lack of social support contribute to the overall level of instability that exists with many families. Therefore, the purpose of the Lifelong Families Program is to provide support on many levels that will, in turn, minimize disruption in the family system both now and in the future. During the past six month reporting period, the Lifelong Families program has newly enrolled 37 families, with 62 children.

Major Activities and Accomplishments
The Lifelong Families Program has identified three primary goals in order to provide stability for its clients. The goals and activities used to meet those goals are listed below.

Goal #1: HIV/AIDS affected families will be raised in stable families with minimal disruptions. If a child’s parent or primary caregiver is unable to raise him/her, transitions will be well planned and the child will move to another caregiver with whom s/he has a relationship. Planned moved of the entire family (child and caregiver) will be kept to a minimum.

Housing
Many Lifelong Families clients are struggling with finding and maintaining safe and appropriate housing for their families. The program has responded by developing a Tenant Empowerment Course. This four week course focuses on helping clients learn:
1. how and where to look for housing
2. how to budget a limited income
3. how to apply for housing
4. tenants’ legal rights and how to enforce them
5. how to maintain a home and get repairs
6. how to understand evictions
Participants in the Tenant Empowerment Course receive incentives for attending each week in the form of cleaning supplies, smoke alarms, kitchen utensils, and file folders and calculators. Transportation and lunch are provided. Also, by the use of discretionary funds from private sources, Lifelong Families staff was able to provide financial assistance to
19 clients, helping them to pay their utilities bills, thus ensuring stability of housing.

**Legal Assistance**
Once a client has met with the staff of the Lifelong Families Program and has developed a future care plan, a referral is made to an attorney with Legal Assistance Foundation who can assist in making the arrangement legal. During the last reporting period three clients have been referred.

**Goal #2: HIV/AIDS-affected and medically complex children will be raised in families who are connected to the community in a number of positive ways—especially stable education (including early learning) and health care (including immunizations and well being)—which provides the necessary support for successful child rearing.**

**Early Childhood Education**
During the most recent reporting period, The Children’s Place Association Early Learning Center has served 15 Lifelong Families children between the ages 1 and 5 who, collectively, have attended 6312 hours of school. Each of these children receives routine health care screening such as vision and dental and, if needed, specialized HIV nursing care. In addition, the children are monitored to ensure that immunizations are up to date. Transportation is provided for the children to and from the center in an effort to remove barriers to service.

**Educational Assessment and Advocacy**
Caseworkers help families with school related issues including assistance with enrollment and transfers, and assistance in obtaining special evaluations and services related to learning disabilities and behavioral difficulties. During the past reporting period an Educational Assessment examining the number of children with IEP’s, 504’s, tutoring needs, after school needs was completed with every family enrolled in the program. The results will be analyzed with the Family Resource Center Educational Advocacy Program.

**Recreational Events**
Recreational events are often a means of engaging the entire family in fun activities in a social environment, while also providing opportunities for individuals to form supportive relationships and re-connect with friends. During the past reporting period, two recreational events were planned and delivered:

1. Back to School Carnival for 143 HIV affected individuals, including clients from the Life Long Family Program. Families were given back packs with necessary materials for school.
2. Adopt-A-Family gift drive and Holiday Party for all client’s of the Agency, including all of the Life Long Family clients. Each client received holiday gifts from a wish list they completed as well as gift cards for the family. A holiday part including food, games, and dance was sponsored for the families.

**Goal #3: The HIV/AIDS-affected and medically complex child’s family will be established in the community with adequate psycho-social services to promote well being and foster the parent and child relationship.**

**Mental Health Services**
Many Lifelong Families clients present with mental health needs, including depression, anxiety, and lack of social support. Therapists engage these clients around these issues, thereby promoting family stability. During the last reporting period, 14 families have been involved in individual and family therapy for a total of 252 hours of mental health treatment. Treatment goals indicate that the clinical mental health interventions are often a crucial component for families to develop stable and realistic plans for the future.

**Linkage and Referrals**
The Lifelong Families staff is continually building relationships with other service providers for the sake of client referrals. Lifelong Families clients have been referred to substance abuse treatment centers, subsidized housing units, transportation assistance programs, in home respite services (provided by The Children’s Place Association), overnight respite services (provided by The Children’s Place Association), and for psychiatric medication management.

**Challenges**
To ensure that the data was appropriately collected, a number of meetings have been held with program staff, MIS staff, the evaluator to review data and ensure the correct data was being collected both for clinical and programming reasons. A pilot incentive system was successful in gaining more data needed data. We continue to look for methods to overcome the challenges of collecting this data to ensure that we identify those most in need of intervention. At this point we think all systems are now in place to support the process and outcome evaluation.
**Significant Findings and Events**

Much focus has been given to answering the question: are we serving who we said we would serve? The program was designed to serve those at highest risk for family instability. Staff has been completing the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) with all parents. Any movement in housing is being tracked on a monthly basis. These results are shared with the Evaluator and used in supervision to plan case services. The Program Manager and Evaluator meet monthly, with the Evaluator attending staff meeting with all of the staff on a quarterly basis.

These results underscore the high-risk nature of families using the Lifelong Families Program. In future, PSI data will 1) continue to be used by staff to establish individual and family level service goals and 2) combined with other program data to analyze service trajectories and assess service needs.

**Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period**

Life Long Family clients will be invited to participate in the psycho-educational HIV Summer Camp which will run 5 days a week for 6 weeks in summer.