



CITY OF STAMFORD

LIBERATION PROGRAMS, INC. Grant Request FY2018-2019

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Tax ID Number: 06-0867006

Amount Requested: \$100,000

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*In 2016, there were 917 overdose deaths in Connecticut - a 26% increase from 2015.
Liberation believes that even one overdose related death, is one death too many.*

LIBERATION PROGRAMS – Who We Are

In operation since 1971, Liberation Programs is one of the area's primary behavioral health service providers specializing in treatment for substance abuse of all kinds including alcohol, opiates, depressants and stimulants. Our aim is to help individuals and families overcome addiction in order to restore their lives and ultimately strengthen our communities. Liberation provides services for youth, adults and families via two inpatient treatment programs; outpatient services; health education for older adults and people living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses; treatment and resources for adolescents and their families; education, prevention and wellness efforts in the community; and permanent supportive housing for families.

Liberation currently has two treatment programs in Stamford – our inpatient program for men and our outpatient program, both of which are described below and are subjects of this funding request. In

addition to our Stamford-based programs, we have sites in Greenwich, Norwalk, and Bridgeport. Together, these sites served **2, 215 individuals in our last fiscal year** (ended June 30, 2017).

Liberation Programs' mission is to empower people and their families to be free of the disease of addiction by providing targeted solutions that restore lives and strengthen our community.

THE PROBLEM – A Growing Epidemic

Stamford and other Fairfield County communities continue to grapple with the disease of addiction. It is nearly impossible to turn on the news without hearing yet another story of its impact on our neighborhoods and families. **In 2016, 917 people in Connecticut lost their lives due to accidental overdose - a rise of 26% from the previous year.** According to Dr. James Gill, Connecticut's Chief Medical Examiner, the vast majority of these deaths were opioid related. Locally, there were 158 deaths in Fairfield County – including nine from Stamford. According to news reports, it is “at least the fifth year in a row that has seen a large increase in opioid related deaths in the state.” **Even more shocking, there were 539 opioid related deaths in the first six months of 2017; and officials have said we are on pace to reach more than 1,000 deaths due to accidental overdose by the end of 2017.** Despite the increase in the number of drug related fatalities, resources for those seeking recovery remain extremely limited. For low income individuals the situation is even more dire.

THE SOLUTION – Help Without Stigma

Treatment for substance abuse can be very effective, but only if one seeks it. Unfortunately, due to the stigma of drug addiction, many who need help will not reach out for it. The state's Department of Mental Health Addiction Services (DMHAS) estimates that 25,000 Fairfield County residents have a serious mental illness, more than 43,000 have a substance use disorder and 18,293 suffer from both. And yet, fewer than 15,000 individuals will actually seek and receive some type of help.

Liberation Programs' philosophy of treatment utilizes an asset-based approach that has proven extremely effective. According to the agency Credo, “We help each Recoveree, through our daily efforts, to re-discover their gifts, skills, strengths, abilities and purpose for living. We will search to unearth those positive qualities; we will seek opportunities to grow them through positive reinforcement.” Liberation focuses on the strengths within each person to help them achieve and maintain lifelong recovery. ***The result is a successful completion rate for people in treatment that is 18% above the state average.***

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Last year, Liberation served 2,215 people through our various programs. These are individuals who are now able to enjoy recovery, to participate in their community and be present with their loved ones. Our expectation is that we will serve approximately the same number of individuals in the year ahead.

Liberation provides its programs, regardless of race, gender, economic status or other characteristic or demographic, to those who need our help. Most of the individuals Liberation serves live at or below the poverty level and many have lost jobs, homes and families to their disease. Many are the “working poor,” earning too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford treatment.

KEY PROGRAMS IN STAMFORD

Liberation House—Inpatient Program for Men

Liberation House, located in Stamford, provides a short- to long-term inpatient treatment program for men with a capacity to serve 65 individuals at a time. Many of the men we serve in our residential program come directly from incarceration—often in need of a change of clothes and a shower. First, we meet their immediate needs of food, clothing and shelter. Then we begin to help them address their addiction and rebuild their lives. Duration of treatment can last up to 90 days, during which time men focus on skills that will help them maintain their recovery as well as work on critical needs such as transitioning to employment and housing. The result is that recoverees gain important work experience and earn money, both of which will help them secure housing once they leave the program.

Co-occurring disorders—substance abuse and mental illness—are common among the population that Liberation serves. Our part-time APRN (Advanced Practice Registered Nurse) at Liberation House increases our capacity to respond to our recoverees mental health needs, thereby improving their chances of successfully completing treatment. It is not uncommon for a recoveree to wait up to three weeks to see a mental health provider. Having an APRN on staff cuts wait times, allowing for timely evaluations and medication management for our clients. Access to medications can be critical to helping a recoveree with mental illness begin to stabilize and address their drug addiction. The APRN also helps link individuals with ongoing assistance once they leave the program.

Program Goals and Objectives and Evaluation Methods: Each man and his counselor work together to develop a comprehensive treatment plan that includes major goals that go beyond addressing their addiction. While individual goals may vary, three major areas for client improvement in the program include the following:

- **Successful Completion** – Men served will attain and maintain their personal goals regarding freedom from alcohol or any other substance use while enrolled in the program, as evidenced by toxicology screens, and successfully completing treatment.
- **Establishment of a support network** - It is critical that men build a sober support network to help them maintain recovery once they leave the program. Each person must decide what is going to work best for them whether it is Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, a place of worship or an alumni group. Additionally, Liberation is always there if someone needs help or just to talk.
- **Ceased criminal activity and resolution of legal issues** – Unfortunately, crime and addiction often walk hand in hand. For the men to build new lives, it is important to assist them in resolving any legal issues they may have including obtaining a conditional pardon

Last year, Liberation House served a total of 264 men. Successful program completion (free of substance abuse, connected to sober support groups and no new legal issues) was achieved by 82%, 12 points ahead of the state average.

Outpatient Programs – Main Street Clinic in Stamford

Liberation’s Outpatient services include individual and group counseling, family therapy, intensive outpatient treatment, medication assisted treatment, and relapse prevention. From day one, services are focused on helping each person we serve achieve and maintain recovery for life. All individuals in treatment work on a plan developed with the help of their counselor to reduce and eliminate drug or alcohol use and improve their quality of life by making behavioral changes such as reconnecting with

family, ceasing illegal activities, becoming gainfully employed and addressing health issues. Central to our medication assisted treatment program (MAT), methadone often offers a way of returning to a normal, productive life. For many, this may mean a long-term maintenance program and for others we offer the option to taper to abstinence. Methadone treatment is considered a best practice in addressing opiate addiction by the medical community and can save lives. Last year Liberation saw a 34% increase in the need for this service.

In FY17, Stamford's Outpatient Clinic served 895 men and women.

Youth and Family Resources

As part of our Youth and Family Resources (YFR) program, the importance of substance abuse education and prevention has taken on new emphasis for both youth and parents. Professional counseling for teens and a wide variety of community activities are part of the services that are focused on building stronger parent-child relationships and resiliency in youth. This is a critically important endeavor considering the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse among adolescents on a national scale and in particular those in Fairfield County.

*According to the Connecticut Student High School survey,
14% or 1 in 7 students admit to being high at school.*

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that youth aged 12 to 17 who believed their parents would strongly disapprove of them using specific substances were less likely to abuse substances. Understanding this, YFR offers parent seminars and facilitates parent support groups focused on improving parent-child communications and deterring teen substance abuse.

Youth and Family Resources include:

- Support services for families.
- Professional substance abuse counseling for adolescents.
- School and community activities and presentations on topics ranging from cyber-bullying, to substance abuse, peer pressure, social networking, parent-child relationships, grief, anger management, and healthy living.
- Skill acquisition for students through role playing activities.
- Facilitation of peer mentoring groups.
- Access to speakers from the recovery community.

Working directly with the schools, Liberation provides a variety of activities throughout the school year that are aimed at preventing substance abuse. Research has shown that science-validated programs, such as those described in the National Institute on Drug Abuse's (NIDA) publication, Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide for Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders, can significantly reduce early use of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. Our approach has adopted many of the principles outlined by NIDA.

Goals & Methods

Liberation works to reach as many youth as possible and engage them in activities and discussions regarding the negative life-long impact substance abuse can have. Our program provides support and resources in an effort to reach the following goals:

- Reduce incidences of alcohol and substance abuse among teens

- Foster continued education, self-esteem, resiliency and wellness
- in children of all ages
- Diminish youth involvement in the criminal justice system

Liberation also works with parents, providing workshops and support groups to equip them with the skills they need to have, what can be, very difficult conversations with their children regarding substance abuse. While the topics vary, the focus is always the same—helping improve communication and parent-child relationships. This is by far one of the most effective ways to deter substance abuse in teens. The annual report for 2013 from SAMHSA found that youth aged 12 to 17 who believed their parents would strongly disapprove of them using specific substances were less likely to use these substances than were youth who believed their parents would somewhat disapprove or neither approve nor disapprove.

Evaluation

Liberation’s prevention approach aligns with evidence-based best practices and national policy. Liberation Programs uses various evaluation tools to gauge the effectiveness of both the presentations and presenter and the impact they have on behaviors and attitudes.

In addition to presentations, students also have the opportunity to visit one of Liberation Programs’ in-patient treatment programs where they hear personal stories and role-play with the clients.

In fiscal year 2017, Liberation conducted 14 activities in schools and community venues in Stamford. Our message reached 458 individuals.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS WE PLAN TO ACHIEVE IN FY2018-19

Continuing to meet the needs of those struggling with addiction is of paramount importance to Liberation Programs. The organization is implementing its strategic plan that will take the agency through 2020. The plan includes several focus areas including the following:

Expand treatment options available to people across Stamford and Fairfield County. Liberation is currently working with Stamford Health Medical Group system to establish an integrated outpatient program in one of their care-sites. Together, the Stamford Health team and our addiction team will coordinate services onsite in an effort to curb overdose deaths, reduce hospitalization and improve health outcomes for recoverees. For the first time, health care providers will have immediate, seamless access to mental health and substance abuse assessments which will be used to determine the level of treatment needed. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide patients with integrated medical and behavioral health care that:

- Removes barriers to seamless health care calibrated to the needs of the patient.
- Provides medical providers with immediate access to valued expertise in mental health (MH) and substance abuse (SA) specialty care.
- Increases the patients’ ability to develop and sustain a healthy balanced lifestyle.

Provide more substantial ways for recoverees to access employment and housing as they leave treatment. Liberation has recently hired an employment coordinator. The coordinator’s goal is to help recoverees with their efforts to find employment. Finding work is an important step in a recoveree’s ability to rebuild his life. The coordinator has prioritized the Stamford-based Liberation House program for men. He is currently in the design phase of the program and is working to identify and build

relationships with potential employers who are amenable to hiring people in recovery as well as identifying, via focus groups, what the men believe they need to be successful in attaining work.

CHALLENGES OUR ORGANIZATION IS FACING

When individuals and families are caught in the throes of addiction with little hope in sight, Liberation can be the lifeline they are looking for—if we have the resources.

Liberation’s goal is to help each person we serve enjoy lifelong recovery, but recent budget cuts have sliced deep. Government agencies that once contracted for our services are no longer able to do so due to cuts in their own budgets. And funds allocated by the President to address substance abuse will not trickle down to community-based addiction treatment providers. As a result, our ability to provide lifesaving services is in serious jeopardy. ***For the time in our history, Liberation was forced to turn people away last year. We simply did not have the resources to subsidize treatment for all who needed it.***

LIBERATION PROGRAMS, INCComparison of Operating Results and Budget for the Indicated Periods
In Thousand of Dollars (000's)

	<u>Budget FY18</u>	<u>Projected FY18</u>	<u>Budget FY2019</u>
Revenue			
1st and 3rd Party Revenue	5,873	5,821	6,540
Bad Debt Expense	(230)	(230)	(260)
Government Funding	3,112	2,985	3,112
Private Giving & Fundraising	856	800	856
Miscellaneous Revenue	123	167	123
Contracted Fee for Services	60	71	60
In Kind Revenue	-	-	-
Total Revenue	9,793	9,614	10,430
Controllable Expense			
Salaries & Wages	5,493	5,415	5,932
Fringe & Benefits	1,488	1,520	1,607
Contract Labor	151	162	151
Administrative Support & Contracted Svcs	612	639	628
Lab & Medical Services/Supplies	170	175	185
Supplies	172	165	172
Rent	201	201	201
Utilities	232	226	258
Professional Fees (Legal, Accounting, Consultants)	121	113	121
Maintenance	137	134	142
Transportation	44	37	39
Food	270	286	270
Total Controllable Expense	9,091	9,074	9,704
<u>Non-Controllable Expense</u>			
Business Insurance	109	111	111
Interest	46	45	46
Property and Other Taxes	19	23	19
Depreciation and Amortization	351	352	351
Total Non-Controllable Expense	525	531	528
Net Income / (Loss)	177	9	199