

PROJECT RETURN
124 North Compo Road Westport, CT 06880 (203) 222-8129 www.projectreturnct.org
Preliminary Concept Paper

Project Return is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization located in Westport, CT. The agency was founded in 1985 when a group of citizens concerned about the well-being of adolescent girls in crisis decided to establish a therapeutic group home to provide treatment and sanctuary. Since its inception, 123 girls have come to Project Return's doors to rebuild their lives; over 50 are still in contact with the agency.

Seven girls between the ages of 14-18 live at Project Return's group home at one time. Most girls are referred by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF); others are referred by social service agencies, treatment facilities, schools, parents, or therapists. In a safe, structured, supportive, and loving home environment, the agency strives to foster self-awareness, self-esteem, safety, independence, a sense of health and well-being, respect and responsibility for oneself and others, resiliency, and critical thinking that leads to positive actions.

In 2004, 13,285 children were substantiated or indicated as abused or neglected in Connecticut, a rate of 15.8 per 1,000 children, and representing an 8.4% increase from 2003. Those abused and/or neglected adolescents coming to Project Return have frequently experienced severe emotional trauma, including abandonment and homelessness, neglect, physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse, or loss of one or both parents. Many girls arrive with complex behaviors which manifest themselves in a range of serious symptoms, including depression, eating disorders, bi-polar and anxiety disorders, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, and cutting and self-mutilation.

A plan of care developed for each girl relies on input from, and collaboration with agency staff, family, schools, private therapists, psychiatrists, physicians and dentists, schools, mentors, student interns, community volunteers, and others involved in the health and well-being of the resident. Stability, consistency, nurturing, unconditional support, and the opportunity for attachment are provided.

In the past 26 years, the agency has been successful in providing many troubled girls with the skills and tools they need to lead independent, safe, and productive lives. Graduates have gone on to higher education, becoming lawyers, teachers, social workers, wives, and mothers. With the agency's recent Strategic Plan targeting community outreach as one of its chief goals, the agency now feels poised to bring its years of expertise in the field of adolescent trauma to the greater Fairfield County community. The Board of Directors as well as key staff wish to develop and implement methods for bringing educational programming to the Fairfield County community which would address challenges faced by today's teen-age girls, how those challenges negatively impact adolescent female lives, and what can be done to alleviate symptoms and to create feelings of self-esteem, resiliency, and empowerment.

The agency would hire a part-time Program Coordinator to manage the creation of programming that would inform and teach around all of these issues. Programming might include the research and development of a resource and referral center, a series of community seminars around particular issues facing young girls, parenting groups, and support groups for girls and their families. Gender-specific training for other non-profit agencies working with adolescent girls might also be offered. The agency would collaborate with other local organizations and entities to develop as well as participate in some of the programming; Staples High School, Positive Directions (substance abuse), the Domestic Violence Crisis Center, the Renfrew Center (eating disorders), and Westport Youth Services would all be solicited to contribute their input and expertise.

It is estimated that the cost of community programming for one-year would be approximately \$30,000-\$35,000. Funding would support a Program Coordinator working 15-20 hours per week, consultant fees for seminars, marketing materials and program supplies, printing and postage, telephone, and other costs associated with the development and implementation of this initiative.

Funding from the Allianz Foundation from North America would enable Project Return to develop programming that it has long wished to implement, and that it feels would be extremely beneficial to the community at large. Community programming would enable the agency to expand its reach well beyond

Project Return

its residential programming, so that many more young women and their families could benefit from its expertise in the area of female adolescent trauma.

Marketing materials and programming supplies	\$ 2,500
Printing, Postage	\$ 1,200
Consultants for seminars	\$ 3,000
Telephone	\$ 300
<hr/> TOTAL:	<hr/> \$26,500

Name of Agency: PROJECT RETURN
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Contact Person and Title: Laura Bard, Director of Development
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Amount Requested: \$50,000

Program to be funded: HEAL

Agency Overview

Project Return is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization located in Westport, CT. The agency was founded in 1985 when a group of citizens concerned about the well-being of adolescent girls in crisis established a therapeutic group home to provide treatment and sanctuary. Providing a safe, structured, supportive and loving environment, the agency strives to foster self-esteem, independence, health and well-being, resiliency, respect and responsibility for oneself and others, and critical thinking that leads to positive actions.

In 2004, 13,285 children were substantiated or indicated as being abused or neglected in Connecticut, a rate of 15.8 per 1,000 children, and representing an 8.4% increase from 2003. Those abused and/or neglected adolescents coming to Project Return to live have frequently experienced severe emotional trauma, including abandonment and homelessness, neglect, physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse, or loss of one or both parents. Many girls arrive exhibiting complex symptoms, including depression, eating disorders, bi-polar and anxiety disorders, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, and cutting and self-mutilation. Often, they display serious social deficits.

Seven girls between the ages of 14-18 live at Project Return's group home at one time. Most girls are referred by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF); others are referred by social service agencies, treatment facilities, schools, parents, or therapists. Since its inception, 123 girls have come to Project Return's doors to rebuild their lives. The average stay is eighteen months, with some girls remaining as long as four years. Over 50 graduates are still in contact with the agency.

A plan of care developed for each girl relies on input from, and collaboration with agency staff, family, schools, private therapists, psychiatrists, physicians and dentists, schools, mentors, student interns, community volunteers, and others involved in the health and well-being of the resident. All of the girls attend Staples High School in Westport or an alternative educational program, have household responsibilities including meal planning and preparation, participate in recreational activities and trips, attend regularly scheduled therapy sessions and counseling, and have visits with family as appropriate. Intensive case management is provided for each girl. Four full-time resident managers provide 24-hour house coverage working in two-day rotating shifts. Stability, consistency, nurturing, and unconditional support provide ongoing opportunities for the development of healthy attachments.

The following programs and services are currently provided:

Residential Program, including one-on-one in-house counseling and support; individual therapy and counseling with community therapists, psychiatrists, doctors and other specialists; art therapy; case management, social and recreational activities, volunteers and mentors, parent counseling, and referral

Vocational/Educational Program, with a dedicated specialist providing assistance to residents in meeting educational and vocational standards and goals

Aftercare Program, offering graduates of the Residential Program opportunities for on-going support once they have left the house, including independent living support, a transitional living program, an Alumni Support Group, a Special Needs Fund, counseling and mentoring, and referral

Funding Proposal

In the past 26 years, the agency has been successful in providing many troubled girls with the skills and tools they need to lead independent, safe, and productive lives. Graduates have gone on to become lawyers, teachers, social workers, wives, and mothers. With the agency's recent Strategic Plan targeting community outreach as one of its chief goals, the agency now feels poised to bring its years of expertise in the field of female adolescent trauma to the greater Fairfield County community.

Through close interaction with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and local organizations, agencies, entities, and concerned parents dealing with troubled adolescents, Project Return staff have become increasingly aware that there are many teenage girls in Fairfield County who may not be candidates for residential treatment but who are nevertheless experiencing a variety of clinical symptoms that impact their ability to lead happy and productive lives. These include depression and other mental disorders, which are manifesting themselves in destructive behaviors such as eating disorders, substance abuse, and cutting. In addition to addressing these issues in their on-going Residential Program, Project Return Board and staff wish to more broadly address concerns and challenges faced by today's teenage girls living at home with their families, how these concerns and challenges negatively impact adolescent female lives, and what can be done to alleviate symptoms and promote feelings of self-esteem, resiliency, and empowerment.

Clinical and program staff, in conjunction with the agency's Executive Director, have developed the outline for a program they believe will address the needs of Fairfield County teenage girls experiencing extreme difficulty or trauma that is impacting their ability to function both at home and in their communities in positive, healthy ways. The program will take an innovative holistic approach to healing.

Program Outline

One Project Return staff member, through her study and participation in a recent Harvard University program regarding trauma victims, has learned that the performance of altruistic acts helps people heal. "Altruism is a special kind of mutual cooperation in social relationships...by helping someone else in a non-selfish way, the survivor engages in self-healing" (Richard Mollica, M.D., from "Healing Invisible Wounds"). Through the development of compassion and empathy for others, a sense of well-being, optimism, confidence, and success occurs.

This new program initiative, which has been named HEAL (Health, Empathy, Altruism, and Love) will seek to help teenage girls who are suffering from a variety of disorders secure a future that thrives on resiliency, self-esteem, and empowerment. Service to others will be the cornerstone of HEAL. Adolescent girls referred to the program will be paired with community programs and services where they will interact with others in supportive and caring ways. Through the development of a social awareness that others besides themselves are in need, participating adolescents will begin to heal through the power of healing others. They will be assisted in their journeys by Project Return staff, by collaborating community programs and individuals, and by their parents, who will be required to participate in the initiative in support of their daughters.

Long-range plans call for 6-10 girls between the ages of 14-18 to participate for one school year. Participants will be referred by local schools, police departments, court systems, youth services bureaus, lawyers, clinicians, parents, and local non-profit organizations including Hall-Brooke Behavioral Services, Positive Directions, and the Renfrew Center. A list of referral sources, with descriptions, is attached. The cities and towns of Westport, Norwalk, Wilton, Weston, Fairfield, and Bridgeport will be solicited. Project Return already has relationships with many of these organizations and agencies, often receiving inquiries about the Project Return program and/ or the existence of other local intervention services for teenage girls in crisis.

Local agencies that might benefit from having young volunteers incorporated into their programs are already known by Project Return and will be invited to participate as collaborating agencies in HEAL. They include Hall Neighborhood House, The Burroughs Community Center, the George Washington Carver Community Center, A.C.H.I.E.V.E Enrichment Programs, and the International Institute. A list of these agencies, with descriptions, is attached. In conjunction with Project Return staff, they will develop avenues for volunteer service which will foster compassion and selflessness through the development of relationships with others who might also be facing challenges of their own. Volunteers will be paired with programs according to their interests and abilities. Activities such as mentoring in after-school programs, working with the homeless, assisting the elderly and the disabled, and supporting new immigrants, will be offered. Participants will be expected to volunteer a minimum of 1-2 hours a week.

A peer-group approach will be utilized to support and encourage program participants. Regularly scheduled group meetings will be held to review goals and progress; airing common issues and brainstorming about solutions will be encouraged. It is anticipated that a group approach will reinforce the efforts of individual participants, providing structure, purpose, and a sense of common commitment that will ultimately have a positive effect. Project Return's core values, which include belonging, unconditional love, holding hopes and dreams, healthy self-expression, and building strengths and skills will be incorporated into the fabric of the meetings.

Because many of the girls participating in HEAL will no doubt be dealing with difficult family dynamics, the role of parents in HEAL will be significant. Each girl must be supported in her endeavor by one or both parents, who will be required to attend regularly scheduled team meetings with other parents. The goal of these meetings will be educational as well as supportive. A simple resource and referral guide will be developed to provide parents with background material and information regarding adolescent issues and behaviors. Special emphasis will be placed on gender-specific education, which will explore females' unique pathways, strengths, and needs; Project Return staff are currently being trained in this area as the result of a recently received

grant from the Fairfield County Fund for Women and Girls. Parents may also be invited to join their daughters in performing community service activities. It is hoped that through these processes, parents and their daughters will begin to more effectively communicate, thereby gaining empathy, understanding, and acceptance of one another.

Both parents and their daughters will be interviewed and evaluated upon recommendation for the program. Following acceptance, each will complete a brief questionnaire highlighting concerns, behaviors, and what their hopes are for participation in HEAL. Mid and end-of-year questionnaires will also be administered to track progress. In addition, each girl will be required to maintain a journal of her experiences in the program. Recordkeeping from team meetings and parent meetings, and some case management for each girl will be maintained. Feedback on individual progress will also be provided by collaborating organizations and incorporated into progress reports. All of these tools will be utilized to measure the effectiveness of the program.

Program Timeline

Since HEAL is a new initiative, no staff is yet in place to administer the program. A seasoned Program Coordinator will be hired to work 21 hours a week to develop and market all aspects of the program. A Clinical Director with a degree in social work, will work 12 hours per week. Both the Program Coordinator and the Clinical Director will be supported by Project Return staff, including the Executive Director, the Director of Programming, and the Coordinator of Clinical Care. Other support staff, as needed, will be available to assist.

The first portion of the 2007-2008 grant year, approximately September-January, will be spent by the Program Coordinator in program development. This includes identifying collaborating volunteer resources and opportunities for program participants, identifying regional organizations and entities for referral of program participants, developing a timeline and program schedule, writing program and marketing materials and policies, and identifying participants and their parents. The Clinical Director will develop measurement, evaluation, and journaling tools; develop case management procedures; plan and coordinate group meeting content; and assist the Program Coordinator as required. Following program set-up, a pilot program consisting of 4 participating adolescents and their families will occur from January-June. A summer program of 4-6 participants will then be instituted, consisting of both continuing and new participants.

With the creation of HEAL, Project Return will have an opportunity to provide outreach into the greater Fairfield County community, reaching adolescent girls experiencing personal trauma and dysfunction who, with their families, are struggling for solutions but have not found any other satisfactory avenues for treatment. Through service to others, it is hoped that a healing process can begin that will be continued after participants have left the program.

All participants will be followed for one year upon completion of their experience. Ideally, the agency would also like to develop opportunities for the continued growth of one or more HEAL "graduates" through participation in the Allianz Foundation Fellowship Program. Over the years Project Return has successfully mentored many student interns from local colleges and universities who have an expressed interest in adolescent trauma or in non-profit management and programming. A variety of opportunities are available, or could be created, for meaningful service; especially rewarding for past interns has been their first-hand experience in serving as support staff for Project Return residents in their day-to-day activities. An adaptation of the college intern model could be developed for the Fellowship Program, keeping in mind that

fellows are teenaged; one possible role might be as a peer “facilitator” in a future HEAL program.

Following the first year of funding in the amount of \$50, 000, which is solely being sought from the Allianz Foundation, Project Return will again seek funding from the Allianz Foundation as well as other local foundations and institutions. It is believed that with initial support from Allianz and a successful pilot program, Project Return will be poised to introduce the program to other funders interested in contributing to the ultimate success of adolescents in crisis who would benefit from a community of caring and support, and an opportunity to be of service to others, as they seek to repair their lives.

Program Goals and Objectives for Participating Adolescents

Each adolescent participant will

- develop empathy for others
- become less self-focused
- gain a sense of belonging and purpose

Program Outcomes for Participating Adolescents

As a result, each adolescent participant will

- engage in fewer risky behaviors
- communicate more effectively
- problem solve more effectively
- develop resiliency
- have feelings of self-esteem
- feel empowered

Attached:

- Agency Budget
- Program Budget
- Audit
- Project Return Board of Directors
- Staff Biographies
- 501 (C) (3) Letter
- List of Potential Collaborating Agencies

Potential Collaborating Agencies

Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services is committed to providing exceptional care for the mind, body, and spirit as an integrated continuum of behavioral health and addiction services for individuals and their families. Hall-Brooke includes a main Westport, CT campus as well as other Fairfield County sites. Website: www.hallbrooke.org

Positive Directions is an outpatient program providing treatment, counseling, and education programs focused on the prevention of and recovery from alcoholism, drug abuse and addiction, problem gambling and other addictive behaviors. *Youth Evaluation Services* is designed to provide counseling, referrals and support to adolescents and their families. Serving all of Fairfield County, the agency is located in Westport, CT. Website: www.positivedirections.org

The Renfrew Center is the country's first residential eating disorder treatment facility. Individuals are empowered to actively participate in their own growth and recovery. Specializing solely in the treatment of anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder, programs emphasize the value and healing potential of healthy relationships. Wilton, CT is one of several locations. Website: www.renfrewcenter.com

Hall Neighborhood House's mission is to provide quality services to assist individuals, families and the community to optimize their potential and improve the quality of their lives. The agency is located in Bridgeport, CT. Website: www.hallhouse.org

The Burroughs Community Center's mission is to provide the residents of Bridgeport, CT with program opportunities, direct services, and facility resources for the purpose of promoting individual growth and community cohesiveness. Website: www.burroughscc.org

The George Washington Carver Center assists at-risk youth living in Norwalk, CT in succeeding in school and in the community. Youth from kindergarten through high school are served in daily after school educational, recreational, and enrichment programs. Website: www.carvercenterct.org

A.C.H.I.E.V.E is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting excellence by providing a safe, fun, educational, and culturally enriching atmosphere in which children can reach their individual, social, emotional, and academic potential. The agency is located in Norwalk, C Website: www.kidzachieve.com

International Institute is a non-profit, non-sectarian social service agency dedicated to the needs of immigrants, refugees and their families. Support is provided through direct professional services, counseling, advocacy and the advancement of fair and humane public policy. Website: www.iiconn.org

PROJECT RETURN
HEAL BUDGET
2007-2008

	EXPENSE	INCOME ALLIANZ	INCOME OTHER*
Program Coordinator	XXXX	\$27,300	
Clinical Director	XXXX	\$15,600	
Program Development	\$3,120	\$2,038	\$1,082
Payroll Taxes/Benefits	\$5,062	\$5,062	
Supplies/Printed Materials	\$1,100		\$1,100
Travel Expenses	\$624		\$624
Telephone	\$560		\$560
Postage	\$800		\$800
Office Supplies	\$1,300		\$1,300
Special Events for Participants	\$400		\$400
TOTALS	\$55,866	\$50,000	\$5,866
*Foundations			\$2,500
*Individuals			\$3,366