

Section I - Proposal Summary

Professional Child Development Associates (PCDA) is pleased to submit this grant application for support of our Teen Club/Teen Buddies Program. Without social skills training, many adolescents and adults with autism, have significant impairments in daily living and interpersonal relationships. A study by the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry showed precisely how stark the situation is for finding success in employment and independent living among young adults on the autism spectrum compared to their peers with other types of disabilities. Only about 17 percent of young adults on the spectrum ages 21 to 25 have ever lived independently. The researchers emphasize the need to strengthen services to help adolescents and young adults and their families with transition planning.¹ Many evidence-based studies have shown that social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders can be highly beneficial. PCDA's proposal for our Teen Club/Teen Buddies Program addresses a high and unmet need amongst the underserved adolescent population of those with autism spectrum disorders in Los Angeles County. A grant of \$10,000 will support the goal of providing socialization training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders, a project that fits within the UPS Foundation funding initiative/focus area of Diversity/Inclusion.

Section II – Organization Description

Mission of PCDA

PCDA improves the lives of children and young adults who have autism or other developmental challenges through leadership in family-centered, multidisciplinary services and professional training.

History of PCDA

Diane Cullinane, M.D., a board-certified developmental pediatrician, and Mimi Winer, R.N., M.S., a clinical nurse specialist, founded PCDA in 1996 to provide services for children with developmental challenges that linked families to every aspect of a child's treatment. In 2008, PCDA reincorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization. This change in organizational structure allowed the agency to reach a broader population and to more fully integrate with local communities.

Professional Child Development Associates serves children from birth to 21 years of age, including children with a diagnosis of autism, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, premature birth, genetic syndromes, or other developmental or behavioral concerns. This multi-disciplinary team includes a developmental pediatrician, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, registered dietitians, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, developmental interventionists, and music therapists. This comprehensive group of specialists provides evaluation, consultation and intervention services as a multidisciplinary team.

PCDA serves more than 1,000 children and young adults annually through a comprehensive continuum of services. By utilizing the DIR[®] approach (D=Developmental, I=Individual differences, R=Relationship-based), PCDA utilizes each child's unique strengths while incorporating the family into the interventions. This approach is highly effective in helping children to achieve meaningful developmental progress.

PCDA Goals

As an organization, our primary goal is to meet the needs of children with developmental challenges and

¹ Heasley, S. (2013 September 3). Few Young Adults with Autism Living Independently. Retrieved February 27, 2016, from <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2013/09/03/few-autism-independently/18647/>

their families for quality programs and therapy services based on our core values, and to provide training for professionals that further extends the reach of the DIR® philosophy. This includes the following sub-goals:

- Maintain highest quality services
- Innovate new service models to meet the needs of the community
- Collaborate with other community agencies
- Advocate for equality in access for services for all families
- Offer a range of training opportunities
- Enhance operations to support quality outcomes for children and families

PCDA Programs and Services

PCDA offers an array of programs and services for children with challenges in movement, communication, eating, learning, or behavior. Children may have a diagnosis of premature birth, autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, Down syndrome, language delay, behavioral problems, global delay, birth abnormalities, hearing or vision impairment, or other conditions affecting development. Services include:

- Building Blocks Infant Development Program (Birth to 3 years)
- Pre-school Support Services
- Social Emotional Development Intervention/ DIR® Floortime (3 to 12 years)
- Psychology and Counseling
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Augmentative & Assistive Communication
- Music Therapy
- Adapted Music Lessons
- Adapted Art Lessons
- Nutrition Guidance and Counseling
- Interdisciplinary Feeding Team
- Social Skills Groups (3 to 12 years)
- Teen Club/Teen Buddies (13 to 18 years)
- Young Adults program (18 to 21 years)
- Special Olympics Young Athletes Program
- Sibling program

Geographic Area Served

PCDA clients reside in the greater Pasadena area, the city of Los Angeles, the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys, West Covina, Downey, La Mirada and Whittier. PCDA offers programs and services to children and families in our facility in Pasadena, and also serves children in their homes and schools. PCDA operates a satellite location for Feeding Team interventions in downtown Los Angeles, and partners with South Central LAMP, the YMCA of Boyle Heights, and the City of Baldwin Park Department of Recreation and Community Services and other agencies to provide services for underserved and low income communities where they live.

Constituency Served

PCDA serves children from birth to 21 years of age, two-thirds of which are boys, and one-third, girls. Our clients reflect Southern California's diversity with approximately 10% of our children and families African-American, 40% Hispanic/Latino, 20% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 35% Caucasian. A significant percentage of the families we serve are classified as moderate, low or very low income according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau definitions of 80%, 50% or 30% of local median income. Of eligible self-reporting PCDA client families during the second quarter of 2016 (i.e., not including school district contract family clients from whom we do not collect or have access to this kind of data), 48% can be classified as moderate to very low income. In other words, almost half of our self-reporting clients would not have access to services for their children without state support through the regional center system which does not reimburse PCDA at rates that cover the cost of providing the services, necessitating the need for additional fundraising from individuals and foundations. Charitable support directly underwrites services to children who would have great difficulty accessing them if they needed to pay for them privately. PCDA can continue to serve large numbers of regional center clients because the funding gap for those services are underwritten, in part, by the generous support of donors like the UPS Foundation.

Section III – Project Description, History and Community Impact

Description & History

Teen Club/Teen Buddies is a socialization program, started in 2006, for teenagers 13-17 years of age who have developmental disabilities including mental retardation, autism, or similar conditions. There are increasing numbers of teens with autism for whom the primary challenge is social communication and interaction. School programs are geared toward individual academic achievement and do not adequately address social needs, particularly community integration skills needed for the work environment. Teen Club/Teen Buddies addresses these skills as well as any other pertinent issues or concerns the teens may have with behavior or development.

In 2016, PCDA served 234 teens in the Teen Club/Teen Buddies program. Teen Club has a staff-to-client ratio of 1:4 and is designed for teens who are higher functioning in their ability to communicate and regulate their emotions and behavior. Teen Buddies provides a staff-to-client ratio of 1:1, giving additional support to teens who need more intensive support to communicate and engage in social interaction. Each teen's progress is evaluated every six months to ensure the program is addressing their individual needs.

Teen Club/Teen Buddies meets twice a week, including a 1½-hour session in the clinic on a weekday evening and a 2-hour activity on Saturdays in the community each week. On the weeknight, teens meet in small groups to brainstorm, propose ideas, persuade and listen to each other, and ultimately make decisions as a group about the activities they will pursue together based on mutual interests, program goals and allotted budget. On Saturday mornings, teens meet in the community to implement the activities they've planned, which may focus on community service, socialization training, or pre-vocational interests. Activities are chosen or created with the purpose of providing opportunities for the teenagers to learn skills needed for social interaction, learn daily living skills in the community, and practice skills needed for the work environment. Examples of activities include navigating public transportation or ordering in restaurants, volunteering at community events or at other local nonprofit agencies, such as stocking a food pantry, and enjoying cultural and social activities like bowling or visiting a museum.

Through the Teen Club/Teen Buddies Program, PCDA helps teens achieve their individual developmental goals and helps them learn valuable skills that will support successful inclusion in the community. A central goal of

Teen Club/Teen Buddies is to increase positive socialization experiences. Teens expand their social connections and opportunities in a positive, non-judgmental atmosphere. Many of the teens' daily interactions with peers take place in school, sports, or social settings where social hierarchies create social pressures that can lead to isolation and rejection of those who are perceived as "different." And often, teens on the autism spectrum need support in order to learn how to develop true friendships. In the Teen Club/Teen Buddies setting, facilitators support participants in treating each other with mutual respect and positive regard, and in a group of peers, the teens will often form strong friendships with one another.

Another goal of Teen Club/Teen Buddies is to help teens learn to work with others using high levels of social-emotional development. Teens gain experience identifying and defining problems and producing and implementing ideas, in a group setting, utilizing input from others. Being able to combine ideas from multiple sources requires flexible thinking and an ability to see a situation from other people's perspectives. Developing these skills can help young people enhance their understanding that others have thoughts and feelings that differ from one's own, thereby increasing empathy and relationship-building skills. This is an area of social cognition that is especially challenging for many individuals on the autistic spectrum or with similar disabilities. In addition, teens develop creativity through participating in a self-driven process that builds on original ideas and emphasizes individuals taking initiative. Teens learn to encourage creativity in their peers and themselves. They gain communication skills to encourage each other, such as listening openly and actively to one another, asking questions for clarification, building on what others have said, and giving positive feedback. Many of these skills are particularly challenging for teens with disabilities; for example, building on others' ideas requires both understanding what another teen is proposing and drawing logical links to one's own ideas. These skills are at high levels of social-emotional development.

A third important goal of Teen Club/Teen Buddies is to help teens learn life skills in the community that will enhance participation in social and work environments. Through visits from professionals to Teen Club/Teen Buddies meetings, teens learn about the world of work and about different vocations that may be of interest when they are older. They may choose to meet with a vocational counselor or take some vocational interest inventories. They might also make contact with a young adult with a disability who is already employed, and even make arrangements to visit that person at the workplace. Community service projects are also a regular part Teen Club/Teen Buddies, with the teens choosing where and how to donate their time in the community according to their interests and the needs they perceive. Through these activities, teens are encouraged to consider the world around them and their place in it over time.

Community Impact

There are currently 194 teens enrolled in the Teen Club/Teen Buddies program, and 234 were in the program during the 2016 calendar year. (Teens age out of the program when they are 18, so there is always some fluctuation in the group's enrollment.) At any given time, there are teens in the program reflecting a broad range of neurodiversity with an assortment of developmental challenges and abilities. But with the support of the Teen Club/Teen Buddies clinicians and their peers, participants typically make significant strides in their own social-emotional development. Since instituting the Teen Club/Teen Buddies over ten years ago, over one thousand local teenagers have benefitted from this ground-breaking program.



A typical example of a success story is Hector, who is a participant in PCDA's Teen Buddies program. Hector was honored at his school last year for achieving a 3.8 grade point average for the fall semester! Hector attends Santee Education Complex, where he is in 10th grade. Hector's mom says, "I believe Teen Buddies has helped Hector improve because it has given him a topic at school to talk about with peers. He has started excelling in

school since he started to feel more comfortable socially. I also see that he has become more excited about outings we go on or trips he has with school. It truly has allowed him to have a foundation for friendships.”

Another example of Teen Buddies impact is Chris, who is fifteen years old and has been in PCDA’s Teen Buddies program since 2015. In that time, according to the clinicians who staff his group, he has progressed in his ability to be aware of other people’s feelings, and to connect with others in a purposeful way. Chris volunteered with his Teen Buddies group to help facilitate, serve food and clean up for younger peers at PCDA’s Turkey Tryout event last fall. In his time in Teen Club/Teen Buddies, Chris’ ability to interact with groups of three people or more has grown significantly.



A final example of Teen Club/Teen Buddies’ impact comes from the parent of a participant: “Ethan is making good progress and in the last couple weeks has made connection with a peer at the club and set up time to hang out at our home and to see a movie at the mall. This is a huge step for Ethan. He looks forward to Teen Club meetings and really enjoys making plans and being with peers. Teen Club is an important support system for Ethan outside of school, as school tends to be more academic focused and it can be stressful. Having Teen Club helps strengthen Ethan’s social skills, confidence and self-esteem to bond and connect with peers. Before Teen Club, Ethan did not have friends, and I am eager to see what develops and grows from this friendship.”

Section IV – Project Budget

A \$10,000 grant from the UPS Foundation would be underwrite the almost \$14,000 budgeted in 2017 for direct therapy expenses for the Teen Club/Teen Buddies program. Direct therapy expenses include buying supplies, food and drink for weekly meetings and activities, and providing entry fees and other expenses related to the weekly outings in the community. Some examples of outings include a trip to the California Science Center to view “The Science Behind Pixar,” an outing to a local clean-up event, or a social outing to a bowling alley. Staff in attendance typically distribute the cash needed to each teen so that they have practice handling money and interacting with others to pay for things. Teens and staff often take public transportation to activities, which helps teens learn how to pay for and navigate those systems. There are also two annual events for which the teens create and implement the budget and planning: a car wash in the PCDA parking lot, and a community art show that last year was held in the Pasadena Public Library’s Central Branch.

Section V – Attachments

1. Grant checklist.
2. Check authorization form.
3. Neighbor-to-Neighbor Specific Project Summary Report.
4. Project/Program budget.
5. Copy of organization’s 501(c)3 letter.
6. Copy of IRS Publication 78 screen shot Tax Exempt Status.