

Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services
Education & Professional Development Institute
Project Description - Stoneleigh Junior Fellowship
October 2009

To apply for this Fellowship, please go on the Stoneleigh site and complete the Individual Application. Direct the application and any further questions about the project to Nancy Kohn Hsieh, Training Director of the Education and Professional Development Institute, Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services, at nancykh@pccyfs.org, (215) 931-4482.

PCCYFS is a statewide, nonprofit association of private agencies that deliver direct child welfare, juvenile justice, and prevention services to children, youth and their families through purchased service agreements with county children and youth agencies. PCCYFS' Education and Professional Development Institute (EPDI), located in Philadelphia, has a unique opportunity for a Stoneleigh Junior Fellow to develop competency-based training curricula for staff working in private agencies serving Philadelphia children and youth involved in or at-risk for involvement in the child welfare system. A competency-based training program is one that is built upon the foundational competencies – skills, knowledge and attitudes – requisite to effectively deliver services. Competency-based training systems are considered best practice in child welfare workforce development.

The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) contracts with several hundred private agencies to deliver out of home placement services (foster care, group home and residential care services), in home protective services and prevention services through this comprehensive private provider network. Annually, DHS serves 35,000 children and 17,000 families through child welfare and juvenile justice programs and 45,000 children and youth through prevention programs. While Pennsylvania's public children and youth agency professional staff have access to a wide array of competency based trainings developed by experts and administered by the state-funded Child Welfare Training Program, private providers are responsible for securing mandated training for their own staff. Over a decade ago, PCCYFS member agencies in the Philadelphia area created the EPDI to maximize the availability of quality, cost-effective training opportunities for private agency staff. Currently, EPDI offers several hundred workshops a year by contracting with trainers identified as experts in their respective fields.

While EPDI has numerous workshops on topics relevant to private agency social workers and case managers, there has been a need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the competencies required by staff to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills requisite to delivering effective services. The need for this type of analysis has become increasingly apparent in light of changes in service outcome expectations, the complexity of issues impacting children and families, and high staff turnover rates. EPDI is in the initial stages of developing sets of core competencies for specific services in the child welfare and prevention program areas and will complete the analysis by mid-2010.

The primary activity of the Fellow would be to develop curricula to correspond with the competencies that have been identified. The Fellow will begin by reviewing our existing training courses to determine how well aligned they are with the newly defined competencies. In collaboration with local and national experts, they will develop service specific, competency based curricula which will be used to train thousands of professional staff in private agencies. The Fellow will also design instruments to measure the strength of the link between staff training and program outcomes. Depending on their findings, the Fellow may have an opportunity to make policy recommendations on training methods.

Additionally, the Fellow would co-author a report for submission to conferences and/or journals. The report will contain recommendations for process improvement in training development, describe the process of designing a competency-based training program for private agency staff and state their findings about the link between staff training and program outcomes.

We are interested in sponsoring someone with a master's or doctoral level degree in social work or a related field. Candidates should have experience in staff training/curricula development. The specific fellowship award will be within a range commensurate with education and experience in addition to PCCYFS' benefit package.