

JOINING HEARTS PROPOSAL



Executive Summary

When Lost-n-Found Youth was founded in 2011, a handful of dedicated volunteers did what they could to help homeless youth who had nowhere else to turn. Now, with a professional staff and an army of volunteers, the organization serves hundreds of homeless and at-risk teens and young adults each year. The work of LNFY has been featured in news stories from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *BBC News*, *Al Jazeera America*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Georgia Voice*, and CNN. In 2016, the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce honored LNFY with their Guardian Angel Award and The Human Rights Campaign recognized LNFY with the Dan Bradley Humanitarian Award in 2014.

The Street Outreach & Drop-in Center serves, on average, 215 clients each month (8% new clients, 92% returning clients). Specific services for 2015 break down as follows: 968 crisis hotline contacts; 2,232 served meals; 600 clothing vouchers; 420 food packs distributed; 288 showers and laundry services; 252 MARTA cards distributed; and 216 hygiene packs distributed. Fifty-four clients stayed in the 90-day housing while they worked on becoming self-sufficient. Clients also receive mental health evaluations/counseling, HIV/STD testing, referrals to medical and dental services, assistance for lost or stolen birth certificates, driver's licenses or state ID cards, referrals to GED training/testing and educational resources, and employment assistance including resume writing and interview skills training.

Our goal is that all youth served by LNFY will know their HIV status and will have access to competent and friendly care through HIV prevention education, HIV rapid testing, access to PrEP/PEP, and linkage to care and counseling for HIV-positive individuals. These services are particularly targeted at high-risk youth and young adults including gay and bisexual men and transgender women of color.

As the only providers of transitional housing accepting LGBTQ HIV-positive youth in Metro Atlanta, Lost-n-Found is committed to providing culturally competent, ethical, and effective services to homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults. The various programs and services offered by the agency are grounded in developmental and practice frameworks that are at the forefront of systematic and effective strategies for youth homelessness and HIV interventions. (See Program Implementation & Administration section for more information.) In addition, the majority of LNFY's staff identify as LGBTQ giving the organization a high level of cultural competency in this area. The True Colors Fund's 2015 report, *Serving Our Youth*, cites such staff qualities as one of the three major factors of success for organizations serving LGBTQ youth.

Organizational Background & Experience

Lost-n-Found Youth provides a continuum of service for homeless and at-risk youth ages 13-25 that addresses immediate needs and supports long-term positive outcomes. Initially grassroots and volunteer-run, LNFY saw a critical need for an LGBTQ competent youth shelter and youth aid programs in Atlanta. Over the past five years, LNFY has experienced astonishing growth expanding services to include a crisis hotline and a youth drop-in center. LNFY is Atlanta's leading nonprofit with the specialized expertise on and dedication to the needs of LGBTQ homeless youth taking a special responsibility to ensure their well-being.

Current interventions include: 24/7 phone, text, email crisis response; Street outreach and drop-in center; 90-day emergency housing (6 beds); clothing, food and hygiene supplies; mental health evaluations/counseling; HIV/STD testing and referrals to health and dental services; assistance for lost or stolen birth certificates, driver's licenses or state ID cards; GED training/testing and education resources; and employment assistance, resume writing, and interview skills training. LNFY's drop-in Youth Center serves youth between the ages of 13 and 25. The center is open to all youth in need regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBTQ or as homeless. Youth Center hours are Sunday to Thursday from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m., Friday, from noon to 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m.

Lost-n-Found Youth is governed by a ten-member board of directors with day-to-day oversight provided by Executive Director, Rick Westbrook, a long-time activist in the LGBTQ community. LNFY's Deputy Director of Operations, Nasheedah Muhammed, M.Ed., serves on the board of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at UCSF, and AVAC PxRoar Advocate, and as a consultant for the AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta.

Lost-n-Found Youth's HIV program is managed by Brittany Garner, MSW, deputy director of programs. Brittany was a collaborator in the 2015 Homeless Youth Count and Needs Assessment project by Georgia State University and she has authored several papers and made presentations on the topics of LGBTQ youth and homelessness. Brittany has an Associate of Science (psychology) from Georgia Perimeter College, a Bachelor of Arts (psychology and women's, gender, and sexuality studies) and a Master of Social Work from Georgia State University.

With funding, LNFY will hire a part-time case manager dedicated to the HIV program. This position will have primary responsibility for creating a seamless linkage to services for LNFY clients related to HIV education, testing, and aftercare. The optimal candidate for this position will have a bachelor degree in the human services field (i.e. SW, ED, HS, PSY, or RN) or associates degree with a clinical license. Preference will be given to candidates who are certified HIV Prevention Counselors and/or have experience with popular education, cognitive behavior counseling, motivational interviewing, harm reduction and adherence counseling.

Program Implementation & Administration

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The link between homelessness and HIV is well established. The Urban Institute says that “survival sex,” trading sex for food or shelter, is extremely common among homeless LGBTQ youth because they lack any other options for meeting basic needs and the CDC reported that new infections among gay males 13-to-24 increased 22% in 2014. The rates are even higher for youth of color—70% of LNFY’s clients. This crisis requires a strategic response to stop new infections. Additionally, those who are newly diagnosed as HIV+ need further support including counseling through diagnosis and connection to competent and friendly care.

LNFY’s street outreach team covers a variety of routes and locations (e.g. Downtown, Midtown, and the West End) in Atlanta twice a week. At program entry, each client is assigned a case manager who works with them to create an individualized service plan. Case managers coordinate with Community Advanced Practice Nurses (CAPN), Positive Impact/MISTER, and the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness to provide testing and access to PrEP and PEP as needed. While some testing is offered onsite every two weeks, other services, especially for those who are HIV+ require transportation to offsite locations. LNFY will schedule and assist in transporting youth to appointments for linkage to care, with a case manager in attendance to help guide youth through what can often be a stressful process. In addition, LNFY is in talks with Fulton County about expanding the partnership to include onsite STI testing, PEP and PrEP services, and linkage to care within 72 hours.

Through specific strength-based case management for multiethnic sexual minority youth, as well as a harm reduction and trauma informed lens, LNFY case managers build rapport and work with clients to create goals around their status—be it staying negative or adherence to care. LNFY fosters an environment that fights HIV stigma, leading to more conversations about HIV and disclosure. It is important that clients feel safe in an environment that understands their lives and their sexual health needs.

LNFY is creating a curriculum with Feminist Women’s Health Center and master level students at the Rollins School of Public Health to create sexual health modules that are LGBTQ inclusive, as well as sensitive to the needs of trafficked youth and the sexual health of homeless youth in general. Through this, there will be monthly activities for youth, focus groups, a needs assessment, and a written comprehensive sexual health education curriculum that will be adopted throughout the agency in 2017.

OUTCOMES

The desired outcomes for LNFY’s HIV services are to prevent LNFY clients from acquiring and transmitting HIV, by providing: 1) HIV Prevention Education; 2) HIV Rapid Testing; and 3) Linkage to care and adherence counseling for newly diagnosed individuals. These services are particularly targeted at high-risk young gay and bisexual men and young transgender women of

color. Outcomes are tracked using Apricot, a secure web-based case management software. Using this software, LNFY can track self-disclosure of HIV status, and link those who are in need of care as well as preventative services. Our goal is that during 2017:

- LNFY clients will receive HIV education.
- LNFY clients who do not know their status receive HIV testing.
- LNFY clients have access to HIV prevention services.
- 100% of newly diagnosed LNFY clients are linked to HIV care and supportive services.

METHODOLOGY

The services offered by LNFY are grounded in the following developmental, behavioral, and practice frameworks that contribute to the provision of evidence-based practice services.

- **Emerging Adulthood:** The prevalence of risky behavior peaks during the emerging adulthood stage.
- The **Minority Stress** conceptual model posits that sexual minorities face risk of mental health problems in their lives because they experience chronic stress that is a result of their sexual minority status.
- **Gay Affirmative Practice** affirms a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity as an equally positive experience and expression to heterosexual identity.
- The **Empowerment Approach** in social work practice focuses on both the individual and their environment, with special attention on the oppression that people experience and how it affects their being.
- **Harm reduction** is a set of practical strategies aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use and sexual risk behaviors.
- **Motivational Interviewing**, paired with **Transtheoretical Change** (stages of change), works on facilitating and engaging intrinsic motivation within the client in order to change behavior.
- Instead of seeing youth as problems to be managed, **Positive Youth Development** views youth as a resource that is to be developed.
- **Strength-Based Case Management** focuses on six principles: concentrating on client strengths, looking to community for support, empowering client's self-determination, strong relationship between client and case manager, intervention through outreach and advocacy, and empowering the client to grow and improve.

- **Trauma Informed Care** recognizes the various ways trauma can impact the way youth access services and creates paths to recovery and resists retraumatization of clients.

Program Budget

2017 Budget Item	Amount	Budget Justification
Case Management	\$35,928	Case management staff for direct program services. 1.5 FTE
ARTAS Training	1,500	Anti-Retroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS) is one of the High Impact Prevention (HIP) models recognized by CDC as effective/best practice. The 2-day training is free but requires travel: Airfare - \$400 x 2, Ground transportation - \$100; Lodging - \$200 x 2; Per diem - \$50 x 2 days x 2
Educational Publications	785	Printing: 5,000 QTY, tri-fold brochures, 2-sided, full-color, #100 text stock
Client Transportation	4,750	MARTA public transportation passes distributed to clients in need of transportation to HIV and support services.
Incentives	2,000	Incentives reduce attrition along the HIV cascade of care. Clients are given \$10 gift cards to reward desired behavior such as getting tested and/or attending follow-up appointments.
Apricot Software	12,000	Secure subscription software used to track client data/progress: \$1,000/month.
Occupancy	15,758	HIV program occupancy costs: Facilities rent - \$5,578; Utilities (gas, electric, water, waste) - \$3,450; Telecommunications - \$630; Accounting - \$2,400; Legal - \$300; Other professional fees - \$1,800; Insurance - \$1,600
Program Management	7,000	Deputy Director of Programs. 0.2 FTE
Total	\$79,721	