

Communities in Schools of South Central Texas
Letter of Inquiry 2017
The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation

Project Title

To support CIS Middle School Student Success Program: to address the risk and protective factors that influence children's academic success in Guadalupe and Comal Counties.

Amount of Funding Request: \$35,000

Brief statement of the organization's purpose and history

Communities In Schools of South Central Texas changes the trajectory of education for students in Comal, Caldwell, and Guadalupe County schools by placing professional site coordinators inside schools to mobilize existing local resources and deliver targeted integrated student support services to K-12 students to help eliminate their barriers to learning. Communities In Schools is a 501(c)(3) established in 1992 and, for more than 24 years, remains the only campus-based nonprofit program for the most vulnerable, at-risk students in Comal, Caldwell, and Guadalupe counties. Started by the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce, our program began by serving 300 at-risk students in the 1993-1994 school year. For the 2017-18 school year, our program has grown to 52 staff, 1,369 volunteers, and 288 community partners providing services to more than 29,000 students yearly across 33 schools in 6 school districts (Seguin, New Braunfels, Luling, Marion, Comal, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City) with an anticipated 3,200 of these students receiving intensive case management. Case-managed students receive targeted services such as supportive guidance/counseling, mental health intervention, health/human services (basic life needs such as shelter, food, and clothing), tutoring, and college and career preparation assistance. Our vision is that all students who need help are identified and served.

Project Description

Students are considered at risk when they experience a significant disconnect between their circumstances and needs and the degree to which we are able to accommodate and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional, and intellectual growth and development. As the disconnect increases, so does the likelihood that they will fail to either complete their elementary and secondary education, or more importantly, to benefit from it in a manner that ensures they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be successful in the next stage of their lives--that is, to successfully pursue post-secondary education, training, or meaningful employment and to participate in, and contribute to, the social, economic, and political life of their community and society as a whole.

It is evident that intervention and prevention strategies must focus on youth at critical development stages. At-risk youth are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, three times as likely to be unemployed and eight times as likely to be incarcerated during their lifetime.

Of the 3,139 students that received intensive CIS case managed services in the 2016-17 school year, 1,053 (34%) were middle school students. We respectfully request funding from the Najim Family Foundation to help supplement the costs of our *CIS Middle School Student Success Program*, providing intensive intervention and support services to address the risk and protective factors that influence children's academic success at middle school grade levels. Our priority will be disadvantaged and at-risk students attending 10 considerably challenged middle schools in Guadalupe and Comal Counties. Professional CIS staff placed on each middle school campus work closely with school administrators and counselors to assess the needs of students and provide them resources that will help them succeed in school. Because we know that mental health issues faced by this population

are a significant factor in negatively impacting academic success, we will have our professional staff focusing on identifying these issues and addressing them with both direct and brokered professional services. We consistently use evidence-based research and practices to design age- and developmentally-appropriate programs and services that address problem behaviors, promote academic success, and enhance overall health and wellbeing for these students. We will focus our efforts on 945 of the most disadvantaged middle school youth to receive intensive CIS case managed services in the 2017-18 school year.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of youth exhibiting mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression. As youth navigate the often difficult path of adolescence, these mental health issues, especially depressive episodes, significantly increase the risk of youth committing self-injury, having suicide ideations, and actually committing suicide. Tragically, there have been 7 adolescent suicides of Comal County youth and 2 adolescent suicides in Guadalupe County youth since September 2016 – less than a year’s time. The most recent was a month ago. This is a crisis and is only one of the issues our CIS staff are involved with in supporting our adolescent youth. We are in schools with children to address their needs. As youth experience mental health issues, depressive episodes, and suicide ideations, academics and success in middle school often falls by the wayside.

We respectfully request funding from the Najim Family Foundation to provide direct and meaningful services to address the risk and protective factors that influence children’s academic success at the critical juncture of middle school. Our top priority will be disadvantaged and at-risk students attending 10 middle schools in Guadalupe and Comal Counties. Every professional site coordinator at these schools has a Master’s Degree in Social Work or Counseling, just the credentials that prepare them for addressing the specific needs of these youth and helping them to be successful and prepared for high school. We use evidence-based research and practices to design age- and developmentally-appropriate programs and services that address problem behaviors, promote academic success, and provide the right support, both mentally and academically, for these students at a critical juncture in their young lives. Our student success programming provides a framework for implementing coordinated, comprehensive student programs and services specifically designed for them to achieve success.

Brief statement of any previous funding received from The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation

CIS gratefully acknowledges and is thankful for funding received. A grant of \$25,000 was received in 2008 to support Project Success a comprehensive college access and transition program offered to at-risk high school students. In 2011 we were fortunate to receive \$30,000 to support the drop-out prevention program at New Braunfels Middle School. In 2012 a grant of \$22,000 was received to support the *Mentoring Program* that provides community volunteers for on-campus one-on-one mentoring of at-risk students. In 2014 the Foundation provided \$30,000 for new-school services at Jordan Intermediate School. In 2015 the Foundation provided \$35,000 in funding for our *Elementary Student Success Program*. And in 2016 CIS received \$35,000 to support our *Middle School Student Success Program*. All of these programs continue to flourish today with the help we have received from the Najim Family Foundation. Your assistance in once again supporting the Middle School Student Success Program will be a significant impact in meeting all the various needs of our middle school youth in the coming year, with the significant challenges being faces by hundreds of youth.

How the proposed project relates to The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation's funding priorities

CIS programs advance children’s educational opportunities by providing integrated services to address issues that impact a middle school student’s decision and ability to stay in school. By providing services to overcome barriers to education we insure students are successful at this critical juncture in their lives and are able to concentrate on matriculating to high school and ultimately finishing their education.

Line-item budget for project in which funds are being requested

Line Item Budget Description	Total Project Funds Allocation	Najim Requested Funds
Personnel	638,844	35,000
Consultants/Outside Services	10,376	
Equipment & Supplies	5,788	
Travel	5,376	
Marketing & Promotion	3,984	
Other	115,433	
Total	779,801	35,000

Children Impacted

The TOTAL project initiative of intensive case managed services will impact **945** unduplicated children.

NFF requested funds have the potential of impacting all students but if directed wholly towards individual students will impact 42 unduplicated children.

Organization total revenue and expenses for current fiscal year

Total budgeted revenue for FY17 is \$2,869,501

Total budgeted expenses for FY17 are \$2,869,501.

Project Timeline: 11/1/2017 – 8/31/2018

Brief project evaluation criteria

We expect that 93% of Communities In Schools served middle school students will be promoted to the next grade; 85% of served students who present academic problems will demonstrate some improvement; 85% who present behavior problems will demonstrate some improvement; 75% who present attendance problems will demonstrate some improvement. Every case-managed student is followed throughout the year to evaluate progress in academics each grading period, more often for those who are especially struggling. Since not all students will become at-risk in the same way, multiple data inputs are collected and analyzed in order to focus on the earliest indicators that a student may be at high risk of developing academic difficulties or on actual student behaviors during the semester to determine who is actually at risk of failure. Communities In Schools programs are required to report every service unit provided through a rigorous and highly detailed centralized system. Service and outcome data is provided by the campus-based staff that works directly with the students and is supported by school or partner agency information. Program outcomes are reported annually. Program and service evaluation is conducted on an ongoing basis.

List other project funders (pending and committed foundations)

<i>Foundation Name</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Committed/Pending</i>
Contracts with School Districts	\$267,000	Committed
Fundraising Events	\$101,472	Committed
Donations	\$20,696	Committed
Valero BCF	\$30,000	Pending
Alice Kleberg Reynolds	\$15,000	Pending
Texas Cavaliers	\$25,000	Pending

Contact information of primary and secondary person within organization

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