

THE NAJIM FAMILY FOUNDATION

Letter of Inquiry on behalf of TEAMability, Inc.

August 12, 2017

Project Title: To support continued access to high quality, specialized occupational and physical therapy services for children with profound multiple disabilities, a component of TEAMability's unique holistic approach.

Amount of funding request: \$35,000

Organization's purpose/history: TEAMability exists to ensure that children with severe multiple disabilities have opportunities to benefit from therapeutic educational interventions, enabling them to participate actively in life. Becoming the premier catalyst for advancing the service-delivery standard for ALL children within its demographic remains the agency's vision. Since 2008, the heart of its operation has been the TEAMability Learning Center (TLC), offering evaluations and cutting-edge therapies in one-of-a-kind learning environments. Other services include: family activities to build community; professional development workshops for teachers/parents/therapists; and supplemental services to school districts.

TEAMability is the "go-to" agency for its population, with referrals coming from physicians, therapists, educators, state agencies, and parents. It collaborates with UT Health, the University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University, Children's Hospital of San Antonio, and Education Service Center-20 to teach young professionals in training to understand the unique needs of the severely disabled child.

Project description: Safeguarding Services for Profoundly Disabled Children: Children whose profound neurological damage has resulted in a combination of severe cognitive, sensory, and motor disabilities compounded by medical fragility are a low incidence population (less than 1% of all disabled children) who are routinely denied access to appropriate educational and therapeutic services on the basis of: lack of belief in their human potential, lack of the knowledge and skills required by educators and therapists to effect progress, and the use of inappropriate standards and measures of rate of progress by insurers (commercial and Medicaid) who authorize therapy.

TEAMability has successfully offered its innovative, one-of-a-kind opportunities to these children and their families for 14 yrs. Its success is predicated on its transdisciplinary approach, which unites the expertise of highly qualified therapists and special education teachers into appropriate interventions, and its recognition that profoundly disabled children must be given a considerable amount of time to learn new skills – far more time than is **ever** authorized by insurers. TEAMability has never wavered from its dedication to providing what its children need in order to realize their potential. Fifty percent of its children have received services for more than 5 years, a testament to TEAMability's success and the satisfaction of families.

TEAMability's overarching goal remains ensuring the ongoing delivery of high quality, appropriate therapeutic educational services for its children. That said, simply maintaining the agency's current level of services is difficult in the face of changes to the Texas Medicaid program.

In November 2016, children enrolled in Medicaid's Comprehensive Children's Program (CCP) were transitioned to a capitated Managed Care Provider (MCP) system. Services to children with severe multiple disabilities have been negatively impacted by the conversion:

1) Determination of the medical necessity for therapy has been redefined, with an emphasis on the child's rate of progress rather than on maintaining health and function. Therapies are now authorized for only three months, not the previous six, before reassessment is required. There is now a demand for a rate of demonstrated progress that is impossible for children with profound disabilities to achieve. This results in frequent denial of authorization for therapy.

2) Managed care is denying children authorization for therapy on the basis of diagnosis and chronological age, making the assumptions that continued therapy will result in no further progress and that children with certain diagnoses are incapable of having potential.

TEAMability has always continued to provide needed therapy when children exhausted insurance benefits or were denied authorization by Medicaid. However, the persistent reduction in reimbursement rates for provided therapies and the increasing number of denials for therapy have tipped the balance and TEAMability's occupational and physical therapy services no longer support themselves. Within the past six months two traditional pediatric outpatient therapy clinics have closed due to severe reduction in Medicaid reimbursement and the subsequent inability to pay therapists.

TEAMability is the only organization in South Texas dedicated solely to providing appropriate services to profoundly disabled children and their families. Its successful model is based on human potential. But the cost of its success is high (ca. \$20,000/yr./child). Further cuts to Medicaid reimbursement rates will occur in September 2017. This includes reimbursing a number of therapy codes at a flat rate rather than based on the actual time a therapist spends with a child. The added time spent writing and re-writing requests for authorization, submitting appeals and attending hearings is not reimbursed. Transition from the CCP program to Managed Care resulted in a budget shortfall of \$54,000 in insurance revenue during the fiscal year completed June 30, 2017. Insurance revenue for FY 17-18 is projected to be reduced to \$200,000 with total cost of services projected to be \$ 295,404 or \$6,564 per child for one year of occupational and physical therapy services.

TEAMability is the last best hope for families of children with severe multiple disabilities. Without TEAMability, the community's most physically challenged children will receive marginal or no therapy and eventual relegation to nursing home care. Funding from this grant will help sustain TEAMability's proven model of integrating educational and therapeutic goals into functional activities that improve the quality of life of these children, by supporting TEAMability's highly trained staff of occupational and physical therapists and ensuring that five children receive therapeutic services that enhance their quality of life and ability to actively participate in meaningful activities.

Previous funding: 2007 - \$25,000 Project TEAM Booster; 2008 - \$35,000 Operating grant; 2009 - \$25,000 Project TEAM Two; 2011 - \$20,000 Project CVI Challenge; 2013 - \$25,000

Project Shifting Gears; 2014 - \$50,000 Physical Therapy Program Support; 2015 - \$14,157
 Project As the Children Grow; 2016 - \$25,000 Communication Project. TEAMability Two-Step
 Support: 2009 - \$500; 2010 - \$500; 2011 - \$5000

Relationship to Foundation’s funding priorities: TEAMability has been privileged to be supported generously by the Najim Family Foundation. Your commitment to providing for the well-being of our community’s children is reflected in our passionate belief that our children – vulnerable, underserved and marginalized – are worthy of the time and expertise required to realize their human potential.

Line-item Budget:

Line Item Description	Total Project Funds Allocation	Najim Requested Funds Allocation
Therapists Salaries	\$133,000	\$35,000
Therapist taxes/benefits	22,547	
Contract therapist svcs.	105,000	
Admin. Salary	13,520	
Admin taxes/benefits	3,222	
Medical Billing Fee	12,000	
Billing Software Fee	4,960	
Professional Liability	1,155	
TOTAL	295,404	\$35,000

Children Impacted: TOTAL Project: Unduplicated: 45 **NFF Funds impact:** Unduplicated: 5

Total revenue/expenses FY 2017-18: \$835,600

Project timeline: July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018

Evaluation criteria: (1) ALL children are reassessed every 6 mos. using a battery of TEAMability’s evidence based tools. Data is maintained by the assessment coordinator and is available to parents, school districts and medical teams. (2) Annual Parent Survey (Measure of Processes of Care) is conducted in August with results presented to funders, Board of Directors and staff as a component of TEAM self-assessment.

Other project funders: Warm Springs Foundation - \$25,000 pending; Baptist Health Foundation - \$35,000 pending

Contacts: Primary: Barbara M. Goldman (bgoldman@teamability.org) Secondary: Adele Giles (agiles@teamability.org) Both at: 1711 N. Trinity, San Antonio, TX 78201, 210-733-9050.