

## Background and Needs (3-4 paragraphs)

Addressing the challenges that face our foster youth as they transition out of the system can seem an overwhelming task. According to a California Department of Social Services report (cited by the Child's Advocates Roundtable, [http://www.caichildlaw.org/Misc/Foster\\_Sub\\_Gov\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.caichildlaw.org/Misc/Foster_Sub_Gov_Letter.pdf)) **25% of foster children become homeless** within two to four years after emancipating from the foster care system. This same citation goes on to state that, "children in out-of-home placements disproportionately suffer from mental health disorders. (One major contributing factor is) the lack of coordination between child welfare, mental health providers, and school systems results in fragmented and disjointed provision of services, and constant placement disruptions for foster youth."

These health disparities are further described in a recent study by the Chaplin Center for Children (May 2005), which shows youth making the transition to adulthood from foster care are faring worse than their same-age peers — in many cases much worse — across a number of domains of functioning, including health, education, employment, and homelessness. The study found that a large number continue to struggle with health and mental health problems. Remaining in care increased the likelihood that young adults in the study would receive the medical, dental, and psychological care they perceived they needed. Those still in care were more likely to report having health insurance, having had a medical examination, and having visited a dentist since their first interview than those who had left care. Conversely, young adults no longer in care were significantly more likely than those still in care to report not receiving medical care or dental care that they thought they needed. The main barriers preventing the study participants from receiving care were the perceived cost of care and being uninsured. Government and philanthropy provide numerous programs to help in this area, but failure to create a system that coordinates, integrates and supports effective utilization of services results in haphazard service delivery and wasted resources.

Clearly, the unmet health needs of foster youths are a major health issue that is being inadequately addressed, in large part, due to the lack of coordination between service provider agencies. The many and varied agencies involved all over the county in helping foster youth are often unaware of the programs and services offered by other organizations. Consequently, in far too many instances, a foster youth goes wanting when in fact, their needs could have been met, IF THEY ONLY KNEW WHERE TO GO.

Abilities-4-FosterYouth is a community-wide effort to mesh service providers into a coordinated whole that can better meet these unmet health needs. There are many agencies working in the arena of foster youth service, but there is not yet a collaborate system to link these organizations to provide service efficiencies for foster youth. In February of 2005, Pangea was approached by a group of community advocates for foster youth who were working together for three years to put a service coordination system into place for emancipating foster youth. As we began to learn more about their goals, it became apparent the Pangea had the technical framework through our Abilities Networks information system to achieve their objectives. This began the process of customizing Abilities Networks into Abilities-4-FosterYouth (A4FY). Today, A4FY has broad support from community leaders in health and human service, housing, education, County Supervisors, service providers, and most importantly, foster youth and former foster (*list of supporter available upon request*).

## Proposal (4-5 paragraphs)

The rationale underpinning A4FY is simply this – the network of foster care community-based providers can better meet their shared client’s needs through enhanced collaboration, coordination and integration, and that this can be accomplished to an unprecedented level through the application of new technologies. The extended vision is for transitioning and former foster youth living in San Diego County, and their supporters, to gain access to a unified, central resource that will offer a thorough understanding of all services, opportunities, and supports available to emancipated youth, including eligibility requirements. This will provide a vehicle in which to continue to wrap services around foster youth as they emancipate from foster care so that we can increase their chances of succeeding in all areas of functioning as their non-foster care peers.

Three A4FY program framework strategies are particularly exciting: 1) the use of former foster youth as systems designer / testers / collaboration builders / trainers; 2) the bottom-up services information strategy; and 3) the technological capacity building for each partner organization:

Under the first strategy, former foster youth will be recruited and trained to: test the system and provide feedback into design features; perform outreach to other foster youth; and promote the program to organizations that will use the system. This approach will ensure that both foster youth service recipients as well as collaborating partners understand the program’s benefits from a service user’s perspective, ensuring the program’s integration into both the community of service providers as well as into the culture of service users. In addition, these opportunities to contribute to the A4FY team will be very empowering and career enhancing for the former foster youth members who participate. Resources to support this foster youth leadership and participation have already been acquired through a grant obtained by a partner organization, the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, who will help lead this aspect of the work.

To ensure the A4FY program’s information is current and relevant, the system’s data will be provided through a “bottom-up” approach, in which each provider links its services information into a broad network, accessible to the various customers who need that information. All data in the system is driven by local participants who know and understand the needs of their constituents. The third model program element that merits highlighting is the technological capacity -building benefits enjoyed by collaborating A4FY community-based partners. The A4FY technology includes an internet-based capacity for posting and retrieving resource information onto one website, using standardized forms and data fields. Part of this package includes providing a user-friendly webpage template for each organization that can either link to an organization’s own webpage or serve as that organization’s webpage, if it doesn’t have one already. Fundamental to the success of this project is the input from partner organizations in designing forms and system features. The following organizations are a few of the partners collaborating on this effort (*support letter available upon request*):

- **County of San Diego – Health and Human Services** – will work with us to identify health and human services available to foster youth and train case workers on the system.
- **Casey Family Programs (San Diego and Statewide)** – will help to identify and promote the system to service providers, foster youth, and foster families, and assist with Statewide expansion and policy efforts through their Youth Transaction Action Teams.
- **211 San Diego**- will work with us to familiarize their operators with the system so that when foster youth/former foster youth call they are able to quickly find resources specific to them.

- **San Diego County Juvenile Courts** - will help promote the system to foster youth and agencies working with youth involved in the juvenile system or at risk of involvement.
- **San Diego County Office of Education** - will work with us to provide education resources and coordinate with schools/school districts to reach out to youth.
- **Child Abuse Prevention Foundation** – will work with us to promote the system to foster youth and serve as our partner to facilitate foster youth participation in the project.
- **County of San Diego - Housing and Community Development** – will help identify housing resources, vouchers, and related opportunities, to prevent homelessness.

A4FY shares the important vision of The California Endowment’s Health Access goal of promoting effective coordination of health and mental health services. By putting in place a community wide program to identify, determine eligibility, and apply for available services, A4FY will streamline the process for foster youth to receive vital services to their health and well being. A4FY will create a virtual bridge between service providers and foster youth. Building this bridge is essential if we are to meet our community-wide responsibility to the health and well-being of our foster youth. This bridge will help start the process of building a coalition across public and private sectors to expand access to health services for all Californian’s foster youth.

**Objectives and Outcomes** (2-3 paragraphs)

<b>Objectives/Activities</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<p>Foster youth services will be coordinated, the available tools introduced, their use and benefits described, and a network of foster use service providers will be created.</p> <p>Outreach, collaboration-building and recruitment activities will integrate the A4FY system into the foster youth service community.</p>	<p>A minimum of 50 agencies will be classified within the system within the first year of implementation.</p> <p>A minimum of 100 agencies will be classified with the system within the second year. Statewide implementation plans will begin.</p> <p>A minimum of 90% of all known foster youth serving community-based agencies will be classified within the system by the end of year three. A statewide system will be in place.</p>
<p>Cross-system staff training development will be provided for the organizations which participate in the program.</p>	<p>A minimum of 50 agencies will be trained in the use of the A4FY applications, as measured by proprietary proficiency evaluation measures, during the first year.</p> <p>A minimum of 90% of all classified agencies by the end of year three will be trained in the use of the A4FY applications, as measured by the same tool.</p>
<p>Program policy and design will be driven by foster youths and former foster youths.</p> <p>Youth will be engaged in marketing and advocacy activities.</p>	<p>A minimum of 10 foster youths and / or former foster youths will participate as full members of A4FY teams within the first year.</p> <p>A minimum of 2 foster youths and / or former foster youths will serve as participating A4FY Advisory Board Members at all times.</p>
<p>Program design and implementation will be guided by feedback from participating partners.</p>	<p>A system of feedback loops will be implemented, including such tools as focus groups, network meetings and satisfaction surveys to ensure program design reflects users’ needs.</p>

Foster youth and former foster youth will experience an increase in services received.	Foster youth using the system will experience a minimum of a 10% increase in the health-related services they access through the system for each of the first three years of program operation.
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**Evaluation** (2-3 paragraphs)

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<p>A minimum of 50 agencies will be classified within the system within the first year of implementation.</p> <p>A minimum of 100 agencies will be classified with the system within the second year. Statewide implementation plans will begin.</p> <p>A minimum of 90% of all known foster youth serving community-based agencies will be classified within the system by the end of year three. A statewide system will be in place.</p>	<p>The number of participating agencies will be tracked monthly, and the results compiled into monthly reports for review by the Executive Director, and into quarterly reports for review by the Board.</p> <p>Additional communities partnering in the Casey Youth Transaction Action Team will be participating in implementing a A4FY system in their communities.</p>
<p>A minimum of 50 agencies will be trained in the use of the A4FY applications, as measured by proprietary proficiency evaluation measures, during the first year.</p> <p>A minimum of 90% of all classified agencies by the end of year three will be trained in the use of the A4FY applications, as measured by the same tool.</p>	<p>Staff training will be measured using the proprietary training tool, and the results compiled into monthly reports for review by the Executive Director, and into quarterly reports for review by the Board.</p>
<p>A minimum of 10 foster youths and / or former foster youths will participate as full members of A4FY teams within the first year.</p> <p>A minimum of 2 foster youths and / or former foster youths will serve as participating A4FY team members at all times.</p>	<p>The number of participating youth will be reported to Pangea by our partner agency, Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, which will be compiled into monthly reports for review by the Executive Director, and into quarterly reports for review by the Board</p>
<p>A system of feedback loops will be implemented; including such tools as focus groups, network meetings and satisfaction surveys to ensure program design reflects users' needs.</p>	<p>The Executive Director will ensure a feedback system is designed and implemented, and quarterly reports will be provided for review by the Board.</p>
<p>Foster youth using the system will experience a minimum of a 10% increase in the health-related services they access through the system for each of the first three years of program operation.</p>	<p>A baseline usage figure will be established six months into the program's implementation, and the number of users will be tracked, along with data describing the resources these users receive. In addition, the Executive Director will ensure background, community-wide data is compiled regarding the quality of lives experienced by foster youths throughout the community, for evidence of community-wide programmatic impacts.</p>

## **Organizational Capacity** (1–2 paragraphs)

Since our inception in 1996, Pangea has been developing solutions that ensure all segments of the community enjoy the vast benefits of technology, particularly those underserved by traditional institutions. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we work closely with community-based organizations to implement technology solutions that strengthen their efforts to serve their communities. Pangea's software team has a proven track record of developing and implementing nationwide service coordination systems. Our Abilities-4-Resident Service Coordinators system is used by over 500 affordable housing facilities that provide supportive housing for low income seniors, families, and people with disabilities. Service Coordinators across America use the system daily to identify, link, and monitor health and social services for their residents. Within three years, the project has become 100% self sustainable with a small annual fee paid by each agency.

Pangea's Board of Directors is committed to this project, and includes members such as the principal of Lincoln High School, which is projected to have the most foster youth in San Diego County when it opens in the Fall of 2007 (Gompers, the feeder school, currently has the most foster youth). Another board member represents San Diego City Schools Special Education Department, which has high levels of foster youth. Pangea also has an Advisory Board specific to this project.

## **Risk Analysis** (2–3 paragraphs)

A4FY is not, however, just about technology. Just as many of us have Nordic Trac's or StairMaster machines gathering dust in our garages, so too will the success of A4FY depend on its integration into the everyday working lives of our partners and foster youth customers. Pangea has invested extensive efforts to develop strategies that ensure this integration happens. The implementation of A4FY is based on the 10 / 90 principle – that in order for these types of efforts to succeed, 10% of the effort must focus on the technology and 90% must focus on the people who will use it. Pangea provides on-site user training along with on-demand telephone technical assistance. The training emphasizes everyday user benefits to demonstrate how this tool can improve the productivity and efficiency of service provider staff, as well as the quality of lives for service users.

In developing A4FY, Pangea has already invested over a year in creating, coordinating and getting input from the more than 30 local leaders. In the process, Pangea has developed an expertise in the needs of foster youths as well as the needs of organizations serving them. To acquire this expertise, Pangea has worked with a diverse group of community leaders in such areas as health care, housing and career development. We have dedicated this expertise to facilitating the creation of standardized forms that each committed partner organization is comfortable in using. This input from community partners is vital to full acceptance and usage in the community. The technology is the tool, but its integration into the community is our emphasis, and our expertise.

Pangea's success in the area of sustainability is one of our strongest organizational capacity assets. Our Abilities-4-Resident Service Coordinators program has reached a point where it is becoming 100% sustainable from user fees. ***It is our expectation that within the first three years of this grant, A4FY will achieve a similar level of full sustainability through user fees.*** For our initial start up costs, we are seeking grants from foundations and corporations. We have been invited to submit proposals to organizations such as Casey Family Programs (\$200,000), Alliance Healthcare Foundation (\$300,000), Qualcomm (\$50,000), and County Supervisors (*pending grants in budget*).