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Executive Summary

The UMBC Choice Program will have 44 AmeriCorps members who will provide community based intensive case management services to youth and their families from at risk environments in the Baltimore-Washington metro area, Maryland and in New Castle County, Delaware. At the end of the 1st program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing educational, vocational, and advocacy services to youth with outcomes including: 90 youth demonstrating increased vocational knowledge, 255 youth having decreased crime/gang involvement, 30 youth improving their academic engagement, and 40 youth at risk of being placed in permanent foster care will be reunited or maintained within their families. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 50 volunteers that will be engaged in providing after school programming at two universities, two public schools and assist with developing vocational opportunities for youth in the program. This program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Education. The CNCS investment of \$28,000, will be leveraged with the \$2,895,920 in other resources the program has secured from the MD Department of Juvenile Services, \$2,071,167; M. Casey Foundation, \$150,000; Baltimore City Department of Social Services, \$399,998; Open Society Institute, \$50,000; Baltimore County Government, \$75,000; and Sherman Foundation, \$149,755, in addition to individual and private donations.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

a. Problem/Need

The Choice Program is a community-based case management program with a goal of fostering healthy development and resiliency among youth who face adverse individual or environmental challenges in their daily lives. Choice focuses on building youth competency around education, employment, and positive community behavior. The overarching goals of the program are to reduce recidivism and out-of-home placements, strengthen youth and family ties to the community through education and employment, and promote community safety.

The Choice Program Maryland interventions concentrate services in Baltimore-Washington metro area. In Baltimore City, poverty rates are almost quadruple those for the State of Maryland as a whole. Baltimore is ranked first of the fifty most populous cities in the gap between graduation rates of urban and suburban schools (34% in the city, 74% in suburban areas). Baltimore consistently ranks in the top ten in nationwide surveys of highest dropout rates (USA Today citing the EPE Research Center 2008 Report). Research shows the economic recovery has not been realized equally

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across regional and racial lines. In 2012, overall unemployment for the US was 8.1%. The rate for African Americans during this same period was 13.8%, and the rate for whites was 7.2%. Although Maryland's unemployment rate improved to 6.8% in 2012 from 7.0% in 2011, Baltimore's jobless rate remains over 10%. The jobless rate for young people is even more disheartening. According to the Baltimore Sun, there are approximately 93,000 young Maryland residents that are currently out of school and out of work. The Baltimore Workforce Investment Board estimates the unemployment rate for people without a high school diploma is 20.7%. Gauger-Cobbs Middle School in New Castle County, Delaware reports that 61% of the student body has family income below the poverty line. Disproportionate minority contact continues to be a major concern for the state of Maryland and the country as a whole. Although they make up a smaller portion of the population, minority youth are arrested and detained at a higher rate than non-Hispanic Caucasian youth. "Two of every five confined youth are African Americans and one-fifth are Hispanic; non-Hispanic white youth, who comprise three-fifths of the total youth population, were just 37 percent of the confined youth" (Annie E. Casey, 2011). Juvenile detention centers have long-term negative impacts on society and individual youth. The Annie E. Casey Foundation published a report in 2011 referencing various studies that show juvenile detention centers are dangerous, ineffective, unnecessary, obsolete, wasteful and inadequate. These detention centers are perpetuating a cycle of violence because youth are more consistently exposed to violence within the detention centers. The rate of youth-on-youth violence within the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center was 47% higher than the national average for similar institutions (Prichard, 2007). In addition, while in detention, many youth fall behind grade level. After being disconnected from their communities and schools, youth often re-enter their homes, schools, and neighborhoods with academic challenges and continued delinquent behavior.

The Choice Program's community-based model saves taxpayer dollars while maintaining public safety. Choice members' daily and nightly visits to youth ensure they are properly monitored but also allows for meaningful contact with positive role models. Choice AmeriCorps Members serve as role models for program youth by consistently checking in with them and providing support for school, employment, short-term goals, and probation requirements. Members hold youth accountable and facilitate youth building resiliency and the capacity for self accountability critical to their future success.

The Choice Program's DSS Intensive Advocacy intervention

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services almost 25,000 children "aged out" of foster care in the United States in 2005 (Casey Family Programs, 2008). As of 2009,

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there were roughly 8,800 children in foster care in Maryland; 13% of whom resided in group homes (Maryland Department of Human Resources, 2009). The Annie E. Casey Foundation reported in 2007 that Baltimore City has three times the national average of youth in foster care and a higher than average number of youth in group homes (Maryland Department of Human Resources, 2009). Data from a 2012 report showed a new trend: 15 year olds, previously unknown to the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, were entering the system at a rate of 5 per month. Youth who come into care at age 15 have a higher likelihood of staying in care until they "age out" on their 21st birthday.

There is a negative correlation between long stays in foster care and outcomes in adulthood. These youth are less likely to graduate from high school and hold a job with a living wage. They are more likely to be incarcerated and experience mental illness, violence and homelessness (Casey Family Programs, 2008). Youth who have had long stays in foster care are more likely to remain dependent on public systems and cycle back into child welfare when their own children come into foster care. Youth in foster care frequently lack strong family relationships, which has a devastating effect on their emotional, psycho-social and life skills development. In short, 'these young people fare poorly as they attempt to negotiate the world of adulthood' (Casey Family Programs, 2008).

The Choice DSS intervention provides a low cost alternative to the removal of youth from their homes. Members support youth and their families to either maintain youth in their home or rapidly reunify youth just entering foster care at age 15. The decision of what specific youth and families to serve is made jointly by the Baltimore City Department of Social Services and families based on need and fit with the program model. This inclusion of family members in the decision is critical in ensuring that families remain engaged in the process.

The Choice Program's Education Initiative

The Choice Education Model is in place at Lakeland Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore City and Gauger-Cobb in Delaware. Both schools meet criteria for Tier 3 SIG status, both have a majority of minority students, and exceed 50% free and reduced lunch.

Members supports students who are struggling in more than one area including behavior, academics, attendance, and/or social and emotional well-being. The Choice Team seeks to support the students who are categorized as "Tier 3" students. These are students who have not positively responded to the current behavior interventions and programs that are offered and are in need of further interventions. Between 2010 and 2012, the number of Lakeland's suspensions went from 15 to 79 which is almost double the K-8 average for Baltimore City.

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Profiles of youth in the juvenile justice system typically reveal histories of truancy, suspension, expulsion and a population of students who are two or more grade levels behind their peers. Reducing in-school arrests, suspensions and expulsions is a key strategy to reducing disproportionate minority confinement in the juvenile justice system. Through delivery of the Choice Model in an in-school environment, AmeriCorps members are able to provide a community-based alternative to students being involved in the disciplinary process and the possible ejection of students from school. It supports the positive development of youth through activities during and after school that build youth competence in multiple areas, develops youth confidence and links youth to people and institutions in their community.

The Choice Jobs Program

The Choice Jobs Program prepares youth from Baltimore's most challenged neighborhoods for the work world. The program utilizes a supported employment model that delivers community-based vocational services that include a job readiness curriculum, paid on-the-job training experience and supported job placement.

The youth unemployment rate has significantly worsened in the current economic crisis.

Unemployment increases instability in already stressed low-income families contributing to poor school attendance and performance. Unemployment and dropping out of school significantly reduce the exposure to socially appropriate behavior and positive role models. Typical barriers to employment that contribute to disproportionate unemployment rates among youth in the Baltimore Region include: transportation barriers, low basic math and literacy skills, difficulties finding a job that cover basic living expenses, lack of technical skills or credentials, limited social network, and lack of experience (Baltimore's Regional Talent Development Pipeline Study, 2013). The Choice Jobs Program, in conjunction with the Intensive Advocacy program, addresses several of these barriers by building skills critical to the culture of work, providing entry-level jobs to young people to build their work experience, increasing their positive social networks, encouraging savings for current and future living expenses, and increasing their comfort with navigating public transportation. Additionally, Choice Jobs supports academic engagement to help youth stay in school to earn a high school diploma, decreasing their chances of remaining unemployed into adulthood.

Members provide a full array of services beginning with a Job Readiness Curriculum including completing effective job applications, interview skill building, on-line job search and application process, resume writing and job retention skills development. Youth receive classroom training to meet specific work place skill needs and then practice those skills at on-the-job training sites. Upon

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completing classroom training, youth are then ready for transitional employment that allows them to earn as they learn. Choice offers 3 different venues for subsidized, on-the-job training. Choice operates two Flying Fruit Fantasy (FFF) stands to provide on-the-job training and experience for youth during the summer. The goal of the FFF stands is to prepare youth with the capacity and opportunity to successfully participate in the legitimate work world. Youth may also participate in paid internships at a variety of local business and organizations. Youth are then supported in obtaining and retaining nonsubsidized job placements.

b. Theory of Change Why AmeriCorps Members

As recent college graduates Choice AmeriCorps members are committed and passionate about serving the community. Their experience as recent college graduates affords them an ability to relate to many of the difficulties facing the target population in navigating an increasingly complicated world. Their volunteer status challenges the belief of program youth that no one cares except their peers and paid professionals. AmeriCorps members are uniquely suited to provide caring adult relationships, opportunities for meaningful participation, high expectations and linkage to needed resources that move participants along the cycle of change and towards their goals. The Choice Program addresses the tendency of youth to participate in criminal behavior without understanding the implications of his/her actions and realizing their chosen path until it's "too late." Members seek to break this cycle by intervening as an outside, positive influence in a youth's life and offering viable alternatives. The cycle of youth crime and the "school to prison pipeline" once begun, are difficult to break. The Choice Program Model provides member intervention at a critical time - after charges are filed or pending -- as an alternative to in-school arrests -- or when youth are being faced with becoming disconnected from their families. Members offer community based services that provide an effective and affordable alternative to incarceration or out-of-home placements. Members work diligently to provide services, navigate complicated systems and broker needed community resources, particularly vocational and educational, to ensure youth do not become further involved in the juvenile justice or social services systems. The Choice Program members and community volunteers assist youth in meeting probation requirements, help youth and families navigate the court and social service systems, provide needed employment training, and advocate for them in accessing resources. AmeriCorps members are uniquely suited to address the needs and concerns of youth and families in the program. As one member said, "The youth we serve are, underneath it all, regular teenagers - very impressionable and affected by the thoughts and opinions of those around them. In my opinion, teenagers are more likely to listen to people that don't remind them of parental figures...so, unlike their teachers, coaches,

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parents, and therapists...we have a unique angle we can ride to earn our 'right to be heard' by the youth." AmeriCorps members are young adults with an understanding of how their actions have consequences. Choice youth need people that will hold them accountable without accusing them of being intrinsically "bad" or telling them there is no way to reverse a youthful, bad decision. The passion inherent in an AmeriCorps member helps bring light to the situations the youth and families are experiencing. Members have recently exited the teen years themselves and can better understand the refusal by teenagers to admit fault and accept responsibility. Members provide a safe outlet where youth can be honest and open and receive honest and open feedback. The member's responsibility is to show the youth they serve the difference between the paths of socially acceptable legal behaviors and criminal activities, as well as the risks and rewards. Youth in the program are consistently made aware that they have control over their lives and their futures as they enter their own adulthood. The Members commitment to work with youth in the community shows youth that Choice believes in them and their ability to be rehabilitated. Members also demonstrate their belief in the community by visiting youth in their homes up until 11pm at night. This also shows community members that Choice AmeriCorps Members put trust in the community and that trust is returned from community members. Members are taught to use the Cycle of Change, based on the "Stages Of Change" (Prochaska-DiClemente's process of change, 1991), and motivational interviewing through training and practice supervision by Ludley Howard LCSW, clinical consultant to The Choice Program. These two simple tools ensure members create healthy helping relationships that build on a youth's strengths and intrinsic motivations for change while following best practice protocols. Members learn to assess where in the 5 stages of change a youth and/or family are and how to motivate them in pursuit of the next stage. The Choice Program sees its AmeriCorps members as the next generation of change agents. Their commitment to service, the community and civic responsibility can be supported to encourage life long learning and a life time of public service. The Choice Program through its Community Service-Learning Fellowship curriculum and reflection activities actively seeks to cultivate and grow a new generation of leaders. This long term commitment is as important as any other element in a theory of change to ensure the brightest future for all of us.

Evidence Base

The Choice Program conducts an internal annual process and pre/post test outcome evaluation used internally to assess performance and progress towards intended outcomes. Data is collected in Efforts to Outcomes software, aggregated and reported out to internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of program and staff performance improvement.

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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) May 1995 Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders cites the following research study on the UMBC Choice Program. A preliminary evaluation by the UMBC psychology department, although based on relatively few cases and a short-term follow-up, is quite positive. The evaluation (Maton, Seifert, and Zapert, 1991) compared 75 youth referred to Choice with 39 controls taken from a computerized database of all arrested youth in Baltimore, matched by sex, race, age, and offense type. About two-thirds of both groups were African-American, and slightly over three-fourths were male, with a mean age of just over 15. About 40 percent of each group had been arrested for what the evaluators termed medium offenses, including thefts and simple assaults; small proportions (1 percent and 3 percent respectively for Choice and controls) had been arrested for major offenses, including assault with intent to maim, murder, or rape, and for felony weapons charges; the rest had been arrested for minor offenses including alcohol and loitering violations.

There were strong and statistically significant differences between the Choice group and the control group on both number and seriousness of arrests while in the program. Twenty-one percent of Choice youth were arrested during the intervention period, compared with 44 percent of control youth; 9 percent of Choice clients were arrested more than once compared with 15 percent of control youth. Sixteen percent of the Choice youth were arrested for medium or major offenses compared with 31 percent of control youth, although the one major offense arrest was a Choice youth.

At a 6-month follow-up evaluation after leaving Choice, the sample size had dwindled considerably, making the results more tentative. But of 33 former Choice youth and 20 matched control youth, 76 percent of the Choice youth had no arrests within 6 months, compared with 55 percent of the control youth. Somewhat fewer Choice youth (24 percent compared with 30 percent) had been arrested for medium or major offenses.

In 1995 Dr. Mary Hyde (UMBC) conducted an intensive control group study that examined whether a community-based intensive supervision program (The Choice Program) is more effective than traditional probation services in reducing recidivism and increasing school performance. The abstract reports the following. "Delinquent youth referred to The Choice Program were randomly assigned to the Choice group or the control group. Although the Choice youth had fewer new charges than the control youth, the difference was not statistically significant. However, secondary analyses using youth's residential status as a covariate indicated that the differences between Choice and control youth in the number of new charges acquired during program participation approached statistical significance. Among the subsample of youth who did acquire new charges, the Choice youth were

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charged with significantly less serious offenses than the control youth. In addition, among Choice youth still attending school, Choice youth achieved significantly higher attendance rates.

c. Member Training

The Choice Program implements a strong retention plan that includes orientation, training, reflections, regular recognitions and utilization of past members in support of current members. All eligible candidates complete one evening of tracking (home and community visits) with a current member before receiving a second interview. This provides the best view of what the commitment and service effort entail. Members receive an orientation to the organization and to AmeriCorps on their first day of service. In their AmeriCorps orientation members review a PowerPoint presentation that includes the history and policies of the program, benefits, responsibilities and a complete overview of the AmeriCorps prohibited activities (Prohibited Activities are reinforced throughout the training curriculum) with time for discussion. There are regularly scheduled trainings required for all members to ensure they have the knowledge and skill-set necessary to serve. There are periodic refresher and enhancement trainings as well. Training occurs as follows: Service 101 (the basics of casework) within the first 3 weeks; Safety and Service Plus (a refresher and check-in) within 4-6 weeks; Non-Violent Physical Crisis Intervention (quarterly); Intake & Service Planning (Quarterly); The Cycle of Change & Motivational Interviewing (Quarterly) and Life after Choice (in the 10th month of service). Other trainings offered are: adolescent development and resiliency, stress management, educational advocacy led by the Maryland Disability Law Center, gang awareness training, and The Magic of Conflict. All training is tracked and reviewed by the Training and Personnel Coordinator. Though our training curriculum is designed to be comprehensive, its primary goal is to support and reinforce the knowledge that the members learn in the field. The program facilitates field learning in a safe environment by requiring that new members go out in the community with an experienced member for their first two weeks of service prior to going solo. This ensures they are familiar and comfortable with the area, the youth and families and case management process and policies. Members meet with their teams and a clinical social worker on a regular basis throughout their year to review cases and develop their understanding of youth and family issues and interventions.

The year of service of members has a life cycle that is divided into quarters. The first quarter (or first 3 months) involves weekly supervision and mandatory training on case management skills, documentation, reporting, and crisis prevention and management. The second quarter involves weekly or biweekly supervision and review of basics along with specialized training on topics noted above. Members are also encouraged to assess and reflect upon their service efforts on a continuous

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basis within their daily team meetings. The third and fourth quarters continue with regular training and encourage members to take a lead in sharing their acquired knowledge and experience with each other, new members and community volunteers.

Each quarter, structured Reflection events are held to allow members to step back from their day-to-day service and engage in the larger issues facing our community as well as the greater national service movement. Members are also invited by team to participate in a Blog devoted to reflections on service. Members are supported and encouraged to participate in local and national days of service celebration including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. The final training provided, "Life After Choice", builds on the previous formal and informal reflection activities and focuses on the members' next steps including how to maintain a lifelong commitment to service and civic engagement regardless of where life takes them. Surveys of past Choice AmeriCorps members demonstrate the power of the year of service long after members have exited the program. The majority report being actively involved in volunteer community work regardless of where they went after Choice.

d. Member Supervision

The Choice program is structured in teams of 2 to 5 members with each team reporting to a Service Coordinator who meets with the team as a whole at least twice daily to offer guidance and support in their service work. This structure allows for very close supervision and support of AmeriCorps members throughout their year of service. The primary tools for supervision utilized at the Choice Program are regular one-on-one meetings between member or (staff persons) and their direct supervisor, known as "supervision." Members initially receive individual supervision with their Service Coordinator on a weekly basis and then biweekly until the end of their term. The notes from all supervisions are reviewed by an Assistant Director and the Director of Operations, before being stored in the member's personal file. Over 80% of the current Service Coordinators at Choice, are former Choice AmeriCorps members and are well familiar with the service demands and rewards from their time as a member. Service Coordinators receive the same training as members and then additional training in critical management skills such as team building, supervisory techniques, communication and volunteer management. Supervisors report to an Assistant Director who manages 3 to 4 Service Coordinators, providing supervision, training and program expertise. In addition to regular supervision by managers, the Personnel Coordinators perform check-ins with members on a regular basis. Along with group and individual check-in sessions members receive formal recognition along with co-branded Choice and AmeriCorps gear at their 3, 6, 9 and 12 month anniversaries. All staff and

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members attend quarterly reflections to evaluate the efforts and experiences of their service.

e. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

All Choice members and staff receive clothing (shirts, vests, hoodies) co-branded with the AmeriCorps and Choice Program logo. Members are required to display their AmeriCorps branded ID badges when in the community. Members and staff are instructed to wear the co-branded clothing to events and when in the community where appropriate. The Choice Program website and blog display the AmeriCorps logo and staff are coached in a brief elevator speech explaining AmeriCorps as part of the training curriculum. Co-branding is mandatory for any new marketing materials.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background And Staffing

The Choice Program of the Shriver Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) has worked with over 20,000 youth and their families from Maryland's highest risk communities for over 25 years. The program began in 1987 when Mark Shriver, nephew of the late President Kennedy, identified a community need in the neighborhood of Cherry Hill in Baltimore City. In 1989 the Choice Program became a program of UMBC and has grown from a 5-person organization in one community to a program serving multiple sites through the efforts of AmeriCorps members. The program currently serves over 500 families annually in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Newcastle County Delaware. The Choice Program has been successfully replicated in other States. It was cited in the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Gap Analysis Report FY 05 as a "Model Program in Maryland." Choice also has received national recognition from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in its Model Program Guide in 2006. The Choice Program of UMBC has received a national direct Education Award Only grant from 2003-2010, and then was awarded another 3 year grant in 2011.

The Choice Program utilizes the resources of UMBC including accounting, procurement, institutional advancement, human resources, legal services facilities and grants management. UMBC manages 100 million dollars in funding, including federal monies from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health and the Department of Defense.

Key funders of the Choice Program include the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Open Society Institute, Marguerite Casey Foundation, The Sherman Foundation, and Baltimore County Government. The Choice Program has enjoyed over 25 years of funding from both local government and private funding sources. The Choice Program's

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grants are fiscally managed by the Center's Business Manager who has 23 years experience. Shriver Center accounts are reviewed by the Grant Accounting Department in the UMBC Comptroller's Office on a regular basis and are subject to regular state and federal audit. Choice's Director has 15 years of experience with the Choice Program and has served on numerous inter-agency teams. The Director of Community Partnerships has been working with Choice and managing its AmeriCorps grant for 8 years. Choice's Deputy Director has nearly 10 years of experience with Choice, oversees all direct services and supervises 5 Assistant Directors. Assistant Directors, each with more than 3 years of experience in the field, closely managing the operations of 3 or 4 AmeriCorps Member teams and their Service Coordinators. Service Coordinators supervise and direct teams of 3-5 AmeriCorps members, providing daily support and guidance throughout their year of service. This position takes the lead in coordinating the staff schedules, transition plans and completing evaluations. The Service Coordinator is responsible for the timely submission and quality preparation of documentation from the member team. At the current time over 80% of the Service Coordinators have completed a year of AmeriCorps service at Choice before being hired as managers. Other support staff includes 2 Personnel Coordinators tasked with training and recruitment, 2 Information Systems Managers, and a Business Specialist. Personnel Coordinators coordinate recruitment, training and retention efforts while adhering to UMBC's, AmeriCorps' and The Choice Program's personnel policies and procedures. Choice has procured the Efforts to Outcome TouchPoint software from Social Solutions to provide real time data entry and reporting of outcomes thus facilitating continuous quality improvement. The Choice Program has made a commitment to achieve evidence-based practice status within the next 4 years and is a year into the process.

In 2010 Choice Maryland was approached by Child Inc, of Delaware to provide consultation in the writing of a grant that would fund a replication of the Choice Program in Delaware. UMBC Choice staff were impressed with Child Inc. staff's understanding and commitment to the practices and philosophy of the Choice Model and determined the staff were capable and committed to ensuring the delivery of the same services as the AmeriCorps members serving at UMBC Choice in Maryland. Choice received CNS permission to add Delaware as an AmeriCorps site in July of 2010 and enrolled the first Delaware members in September 2010.

Delaware CHILD, Inc., founded in 1963 is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to being advocates for and serving the needs of Delaware's children. The Choice Program Delaware is managed by the executive director of CHILD, Inc. an Assistant Director, and a Service Coordinator. The Delaware program currently has replicated the Choice Education Program with 2 AmeriCorps

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members providing intensive in school case management as well as educational and behavioral coaching. The Delaware program operates under a three-year grant to provide services at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Regardless of location, the dedicated team of professionals at the Choice Program are prepared and committed to providing members the training and support needed for a memorable and productive year of service.

b. Compliance and Accountability

The UMBC Choice Program is committed to the AmeriCorps Program and values it as a critical partner in pursuit of the organization's mission. AmeriCorps members serve a vital, in fact a central, role in The Choice Program's efforts to provide service to the community. In consideration of that, The Choice Program's management team has taken numerous steps to ensure compliance with all relevant AmeriCorps regulations and to maximize the partnership's potential "to get things done." The Choice Program developed a new Compliance and Continuous Improvement plan after incorporating feedback from its August 2013 site visit from CNS staff and is pursuing that plan as part of regular operations.

The Plan begins with ensuring all staff and members have a thorough orientation to AmeriCorps goals, rules and regulations and are clear on expectations for behavior, processes and practices related to AmeriCorps. Members and staff have regularly planned mandatory training on topics such as "Timesheets, Accompaniment Logs and Documentation of Service," "Monitoring for Prohibited Activities," "Effective Supervision, Coaching and Evaluation of Members" and "Telling The AmeriCorps Story and Branding." All orientations and training are documented with sign-in sheets and reviewed by the Retention and Training Task Team and the Focus Team (management) on a quarterly basis.

The second phase includes a rigorous process of file review to insure compliance with required forms and procedures including the criminal background check process. The team created 4 check lists to cover mandatory forms and processes that must be in member files. These reviews are conducted at scheduled intervals and at critical times by identified staff with results being reported to the management and appropriate task teams who follow up with any required actions.

Finally procedures have been put in place to assure compliance to policy and a process for spot checking adherence to those procedures through a review process. Service site locations across Maryland and Delaware are subject to the same rigorous review. The Choice Program has learned that there is no substitute for a rigorous and consistent review process to ensure compliance and

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improvement and that it is everyone's responsibility.

c. Past Performance

The Choice Program has consistently exceeded its goal in terms of numbers served and desired outcomes over the last 3 years with this last report year being the exception. An exploration of this concern led to the submission of an amendment for the third grant year that offers four performance measures across two focus areas that better capture the actual service efforts and expected outcomes of all members. Having one performance measurement failed to capture all efforts including those of members engaged in providing youth job readiness and life skill training as well as paid on the job experience and job placement, those serving youth at risk of permanent foster care placement and those serving students to improve educational outcomes. The sole performance measure on number of youth who did not get arrested and incur new charges while on the program met the program and primary funder's target. The program was so successful the funder, Maryland Department of Juveniles Services, has already awarded The Choice Program funding for an additional 3 teams (9 members) in Prince George's County.

The program benefited from a site visit in August 2013 that brought several compliance issues and opportunities for improvement to light. Areas for improvement included member management, site management and AmeriCorps branding. In response The Choice Program has updated a number of member related forms, revised procedures around criminal background checks, member time keeping, training and member files and put a rigorous compliance and continuous improvement plan in place.

Enrollment efforts were disappointing in our second grant year due to a variety of factors. Anticipated new funding came later than expected due to complications in contract negotiations and did not permit enough time to recruit and fill those slots in the second year. The onboarding time frame at UMBC was very lengthy and delayed the number of slots that could be filled at the end of the second year. One personnel recruiter could not accomplish all the tasks involved in onboarding members in the brief window at the end of the grant year. The Choice Program has adopted an aggressive strategy for filling 100% of its 35 slots in the third grant year. The impact of adding a second personnel recruiter has already been felt with the meeting of enrollment targets in the first two quarters of the current grant year. The program staff are confident with funding secured and staff positions fully funded that the goal of 100% recruitment will be reached. Retention met the 100% goal.

d. Continuous Improvement

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As stated above The Choice Program has a plan for compliance and continuous improvement in place to insure compliance and maximize the AmeriCorps partnership potential. The Choice Program has made an ongoing commitment to support evaluation of its program operations and participant outcomes. Service provision and youth progress are documented in daily logs entered in a Social Solution's Efforts to Outcome Legacy database. In 2013 The Choice Program embarked on a process to achieve evidence based practice certification. The organizational plan involves a 4-5 year effort with certification the final outcome. The initial steps have been taken with a lengthy and complex process to document program requirements (based on the five critical questions required in securing evidence based certification) and the financial and time commitment to upgrading our database software from the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) Legacy product to ETO TouchPoint. Conversion to TouchPoint is scheduled for completion in March 2014. The Choice Program conducts an annual process and outcome evaluation of its primary program, Intensive Advocacy DJS, each July utilizing data collected through its ETO database in the previous fiscal year. This evaluation reports out on the outputs (number of youth served), efforts (number of visits, activities, etc.), demographic information on the population served and two key outcomes number of youth who do not obtain new charges and number of youth who remain in the community. The Choice Program conducts quarterly face to face meetings with primary funders to discuss successes and challenges.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

A. Cost Effectiveness- The Choice Program is able to operate the program with a low cost of \$800 per member from the CNCS due to strong funding partnerships. The total budget is \$2,931,120 with the Corporation's share being \$35,200, or 1.2% of the budget (last grant cycle CNCS funding was 2% of the total budget). The cost of a youth in the Choice Program's Intensive Advocacy DJS program is \$28 per day compared to a cost of \$229 per day of detention. This translates to a possible savings to the Maryland DJS and taxpayers of more than \$11 million per year. The average cost for a youth and family participating in the Choice Program's Intensive Advocacy DSS program is \$4000, which is cost effective compared to the child who spends an average of 4 years once in the foster care system at a cost of \$26,600/year/child. In addition to the cost savings, the youth is able to remain in his or her community, attend school and acquire job/life readiness skills.

B. Budget Adequacy- The UMBC Choice Program Maryland has a 25-year track record of sound fiscal management. Current annual funding commitments include: MD Department of Juvenile Services, \$2,071,167; M. Casey Foundation, \$150,000; Baltimore City Department of Social Services, \$399,998; Open Society Institute, \$50,000; Baltimore County Government, \$75,000; and Sherman

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Foundation, \$149,755 for a total budget of \$2,895,920. The requested CNS funds of \$35,200 bring the total to \$2,931,120 and represents 1.2% of the total budget dedicated to operating the program. Choice has enjoyed long-standing funding partnerships and is confident of the commitments. In addition to the funding, the CNS grant provides member slots, allowing the Choice Program to enroll members who play a key role in delivering the model. The Choice budget includes member living allowances at \$22,200/member/year, MD and \$21,500/member/year DE, health insurance at \$1,710/member/year, and background checks at \$54.50/member/year. Child, Inc, in Delaware, has secured a three-year grant of \$90,000 per year to cover the cost of its AmeriCorps members and related program costs.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

UMBC Choice Program

Process and Outcome Evaluation of The Choice Program's Intensive Advocacy (DJS) Efforts July 2013

By Connie King, Quality Assurance Specialist

Evaluation period: July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

IntroductionThe Choice Program continues to support evaluation of its program operations and participant outcomes. Service provision and youth progress are documented in daily logs entered in a Social Solution's Efforts to Outcome Legacy database. The Choice Program has embarked on a process to achieve evidence based practice certification. The plan involves a 4-5 year effort to secure certification. The initial steps have been taken this year with the detailed documentation of program requirements and the financial and time commitment to upgrading our database software from the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) Legacy product to ETO TouchPoint. Conversion to TouchPoint will be completed next fiscal year. The database is used to create monthly reports for funders and data files for evaluators. Data from Fiscal Year 13 was collected and analyzed to provide the following evaluation to determine if quantifiable targets and implemented strategies were met as intended at the start of the program year. Who did Choice serve? A total of 443 youth were served between July 2012 and June 2013. Of these youth, 301 completed the program and 142 were still enrolled. Choice serves Baltimore City with three teams (9 members) and Baltimore County with two teams (6 members) providing a maximum capacity of 150 youth on the caseload at a time.

Total Youth Completing the Choice Program during FY 2013. 301 -68%

Total Youth Participating but not completing during FY 2013. 142 -32%

Total Youth Served-443-100%

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Program Demographics Participants in The Choice Program are predominantly male and African American. The average age of participants at program completion is 16, which demonstrates a continued trend towards serving older youth. The youngest program participants are 11 and the oldest are 18. Demographic Information for Youth Who Participated or Completed The Choice Program During July 2012 -- June 2013 Demographic Variable Male 258, Female 43, African-American 268, Caucasian 30, Other 3

The Department of Juvenile Services is The Choice Program's only referral source. The youth Choice served (100%) were referred from the probation office of the Department of Juvenile Services, all referred youth had case files with the Department of Juvenile Services.

Most youth referred to The Choice Program were living in the community at the time of referral. "Delinquent" was the primary legal status of youth at the time of referral to Choice. At the time of referral to Choice, the majority of youth had committed a person to person offense.

Residential Status at Time of Referral Living in Community 254, Living in Community/CD or EM 33
In Residential Placement 11

Legal Status at Time of Referral Delinquent 192, SOS/Probation 92, CINA 2, C-Safe 5
Committed 5, CINS 2

What services were provided participants? Services delivered by AmeriCorps members including supervision, probation support and structured activities are all tracked in the Choice database. A summary of efforts is provided in the tables below.

Supervision

Number of youth contacts- 50,734

Number of family contacts- 28,240

Number of youth & family contacts- 1,738

Number of home visits- 73,341

Number of phone checks -15,238

Number of phone calls received from youth- 8,477

Number of curfew checks- 9,050

Number of school visits- 12,336

Number of community visits- 8,345

Number of Resource Brokering Facilitations- 1,887

Probation Support

Number of service plans developed-1,125

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Number of contacts for probation support-1,106

Total Community Service Hours-2,178

Total Hours of structured activities-12,868

Total Number of structured activities by Activity

College Night-386

Choice sponsored recreational/cultural activity-5,595

Community Service-633

Duration of Program Participation: Average Number of Days Youth Involved in The Choice Program
Across all offices youth participated in Choice for an average of 156 days or approximately five months.

What progress towards outcomes did Choice participants make?

Choice participants are expected to participate in opportunities and activities provided by the program.

In addition, they are expected to attend school or work regularly, engage in community service, and avoid acquiring new charges. Finally, participants are expected to remain living in their communities as opposed to more restrictive environments (i.e., detention). Data for two of these indicators are presented in the table below. Choice program goals state that: 70% of youth will not acquire new charges while in the program compared with 100% having acquired charges prior to participation 70% of youth will live in the community at the time of program completion compared with 100% being at risk of detention (removal from community) Both targets were exceeded program-wide. Youth with no new charges comprised 91% of those served and 85% were living in community at the time of program completion. These strong numbers are consistently reflected in the program's achievement record over the past 6 years.

Advisements based on evaluation results:

Plans for independent process evaluation and eventual impact evaluation should be pursued. Process evaluation should cover all programs involving member efforts.

UMBC Choice Program Evaluation Plan 2013-2018

Introduction

The Choice Program has made an ongoing commitment to support evaluation of its program operations and participant outcomes. Service provision and youth progress are documented in daily logs entered in a Social Solution's Efforts to Outcome Legacy database. In 2013 The Choice Program embarked on a process to achieve evidence based practice certification. The organizational plan involves a 4-5 year effort with certification the final outcome. The initial steps have been taken with a

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lengthy and complex process to document program requirements (based on the five critical questions required in securing evidence based certification) and the financial and time commitment to upgrading our database software from the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) Legacy product to ETO TouchPoint. Conversion to TouchPoint is scheduled for completion in March 2014.

History of Evaluation Efforts

The Choice Program has utilized the services of independent researchers in the past to determine program efficacy and make improvements to program design and service delivery. Dr. Mary Hyde and Dr. Taj Carson of Carson Research Consulting, Inc. have performed past evaluations for the program. The past research has been process and outcome based and utilized to guide program development and staff development. The cost of past independent evaluations has been \$12,000 to \$20,400.

Current Evaluation Efforts

The Choice Program conducts an annual process and outcome evaluation of its primary program, Intensive Advocacy DJS, each July utilizing data collected through its ETO database in the previous fiscal year. This evaluation reports out on the outputs (number of youth served), efforts (number of visits, activities, etc.), demographic information on the population served and two key outcomes number of youth who do not obtain new charges and number of youth who remain in the community.

The Plan

Now that the program has a logic model and the four program areas have identified the key indicators or requirements for each, based on answering the five critical questions of evidence based practice, staff are ready to finalize the requirements for reporting out on the gathered data. The plan's timeline has TouchPoints conversion complete in March 2014. Data on performance and outcomes will be entered and gathered over a year's time. At that point an internal Implemental Evaluation will be conducted. The next step will be to Conduct a Quasi-Experimental Outcomes Evaluation done with the support of UMBC faculty and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and then an Independent Evaluation which covers process, implementation and impact. The cost of the last evaluation is estimated at \$30,000 and efforts have begun to secure that funding. The preference would be to use Carson Research Consulting, Inc. with whom the program has done work previously. Any research evaluation would go through the protocol for human subject research at UMBC. The desired result of the evaluation plan is to establish that the logic model is correct and that the program delivers the intended services to the intended population with the expected outcomes

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resulting in evidence based practice certification. The graph on the next page depicts the plan's process steps. (Put in bullet points due to software in egrants not allowing the graphics). The Choice Program will conduct an internal process and pre/post outcome evaluation for each program area annually at a minimum. Further evaluations will occur as benchmarks are achieved. There are many questions to answer but the program is confident in its commitment to the task and our eyes are on the prize.

Evidence Based Program Process

1. Community Conducts Needs Assessment (Complete)
2. Define Target Population (Complete)
3. Select Intervention, Develop Logic Model & Identify Key Indicators/Requirements (Complete)
4. Implement Program & Conduct Ongoing Performance Management (In Progress)
 - 4a. Collect Data on Performance & Outcome Measures (In Progress)
 - 4b. Conduct an Implementation Evaluation
5. Conduct a Quasi-Experimental Outcomes Evaluation
6. Independent Evaluation (Funded)

The process is not linear. Each step informs both the previous and future steps. It is a process of continuous learning, discovery and improvement.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

a.1.a. Budget clarification items -- the budget fields are modified to reflect consideration for 35 MSYs at a cost of \$800 per MSY and an additional 9 no-cost MSYs, for a total of 44 MSY at a total cost of \$28,000 (\$636.36 per MSY) for which the organization will cover all program and operating expenses (see response e). Because there is no change in total requested MSYs, we have made no modifications to performance measure targets.

b1. The UMBC Choice Program will have 44 AmeriCorps members at a cost of \$28,000 (\$636.36 per MSY) who will provide community based intensive case management services to youth and their families from at risk environments in the Baltimore-Washington metro area, Maryland and in New Castle County, Delaware. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 50 volunteers that will be engaged in providing after school programming at two universities, two public schools and assist with developing vocational opportunities for youth in the program. This program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Education.

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b2. The desired grant award start and member enrollment period start date is 7/15/14.

d1. Though The UMBC Choice Program does not discriminate against applicants with disabilities, we are not targeting recruitment efforts to members with disabilities.

d2. The Choice Program is not requesting any additional MSYs to be filled with members with disabilities.

e1. NO COST MSY CLARIFICATION -- The UMBC Choice Program is requesting 9 no cost MSYs in addition to the 35 MSYs at a cost of \$800/MSY. The additional members will only engage in activities aligned with the proposed member activities in the application narrative.

e2. The Choice Program has adopted an aggressive strategy for filling 100% of its 35 slots in the third grant year. The program and financial structure is in place to expand to 44 slots. A second personnel recruiter with extensive training experience has been added to provide additional onboarding and training support for all members. The program staff are confident with funding secured and staff positions fully funded that the goal of 100% recruitment will be reached. Retention met the 100% goal. We are confident with the timing of the program's Prince George's County expansion and the additional funding for infrastructure that comes with it, the program is in a position to grow in a responsible manner. The funds are in place to maintain a 3 or 5 member to 1 supervisory staff ratio for all AmeriCorps members.

e3. The Choice Program is able to operate the program with a low cost of \$636.63 per member from the CNCS due to strong funding partnerships. The total budget is \$2,923,920 with the Corporation's share being \$28,000 or 1% of the budget (last grant cycle CNCS funding was 2% of the total budget). The additional \$7,200 to cover the \$800 per additional member initially requested in the grant application will be drawn from the organization's private and individual donations.

e4. The Choice Program implements a strong retention plan that includes orientation, training, reflections, regular recognitions and utilization of past members in support of current members. The Choice Program is structured in teams of 3 to 5 members with each team reporting to a Service Coordinator who meets with the team as a whole at least twice daily to offer guidance and support in their service work. With the addition of 9 no cost MSYs, the supervision structure remains at a ratio of 3 or 5 members to 1 supervisory staff. This structure allows for very close supervision and support of AmeriCorps members throughout their year of service. The primary tools for supervision utilized at the Choice Program are regular one-on-one meetings between member or (staff persons) and their direct supervisor, known as "supervisions." Over 80% of the current Service Coordinators at Choice, are former Choice AmeriCorps members and are well familiar with the service demands and rewards

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from their time as a member. Service Coordinators receive the same training as members and then additional training in critical management skills such as team building, supervisory techniques, communication and volunteer management. Supervisors report to an Assistant Director who manages 3 to 4 Service Coordinators, providing supervision, training and program expertise. In addition to regular supervision by managers, the Personnel Coordinators perform check-ins with members on a regular basis. Along with group and individual check-in sessions members receive formal recognition along with co-branded Choice and AmeriCorps gear at their 3, 6, 9 and 12 month anniversaries. All staff and members attend quarterly reflections to evaluate the efforts and experiences of their service.

Continuation Changes

n/a

Grant Characteristics