

Shelley Padnos  
Founder & Committee Member  
Our LGBT Fund  
185 Oakes St SW  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Dear Ms. Padnos,

On behalf of the board of directors and staff of the Grand Rapids Pride Center, I am honored to submit the following proposal requesting consideration of a grant. We are asking for \$186,945 to assist us in creating Pride Support, a free mental health counseling and referral service for members of the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community. The Grand Rapids Pride Center has been in operation since 1987. As part of our mission to empower our LGBTQ community through supportive services and awareness, we currently offer social and support groups for members of the community as well as many other supportive services.

The goal of Pride Support is to provide community members with the immediate support they need as well as increasing ease of access to affirming mental health care. We will offer free short term counseling at the Pride Center from licensed and affirming counseling psychologists and refer people who are interested in long term care to affirming mental health professionals. In this way, we hope to reduce the occurrence of untreated and poorly treated mental illness in the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community.

Because of your commitment to supporting LGBTQ people in Grand Rapids, we hope Our LGBT Fund will join us in fighting the mental health crisis facing our community. The following grant proposal package includes our needs statement, goals and objectives, methods, evaluation, and budget for the program.

Please feel free to contact our program director, Elisa Perez-Arellano, at [areperezeli@grpride.org](mailto:areperezeli@grpride.org) with any questions you may have. We appreciate your consideration of our request. Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Mike Hemmingsen, President  
Grand Rapids Pride Center

## **Summary**

The Grand Rapids Pride Center is a 501(c) nonprofit organization with a mission to empower our LGBTQ community through supportive services and awareness. Beginning as a small social and planning group in 1987, we have continually expanded our services and impact in the community. We currently offer many different social and support groups, advisory councils, support programs and a LGBTQ friendly business directory. We would like to expand our services to the LGBTQ community in Grand Rapids by offering free short term mental health counseling and recommendations to affirming long term care options.

There is a great need for improved mental health services for the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ people are nearly 3 times more likely to experience mental illnesses such as depression or an anxiety disorder than their straight cisgender peers, yet are often unable to find appropriate treatment that both is supportive of their identities and understanding of the unique challenges LGBTQ people face. This results in untreated or poorly treated mental illness and suicide rates that are significantly higher than the general population.

Pride Support would provide free short term counseling from licensed counseling psychologists. These professionals will be knowledgeable and supportive of LGBTQ issues and can help clients navigate pressing short term issues as well as help guide clients towards affirming long term mental health care. This meets the immediate need for support as well as reducing the stress and uncertainty that comes with finding mental health care as a LGBTQ person.

Through this program, we hope to reduce the rate of untreated mental illness in the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community by 50% over 5 years through our counseling service and long term recommendations. We strive for a 90% approval rating of our psychologist and for at least 70% of those that choose to pursue long term care to remain with that care provider for at least 3 months.

The first year budget of Pride Support is to \$194,027. We are asking for \$186,945 to support the salary of 2 counseling psychologists and a new program coordinator for the first year. After this period, we will use the accomplishments of the program to aid in soliciting corporate sponsorships of the program. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

## **Problem Statement**

The Grand Rapids Pride Center is dedicated to empowering our LGBTQ community through supportive services and awareness. We would like to expand our services to include free short term counseling and referrals of affirming long term mental health care to members of the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community. LGBTQ people are at a high risk for mental health problems. Some statistics are:

- LGBTQ people are nearly 3 times more likely to experience major depression or anxiety disorders than their straight cisgender peers.
- LGBTQ people are 4 times more likely to consider attempting suicide than their cisgender straight peers.
- Those who face rejection from their families after coming out are 8 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who are accepted by their families.
- 41% of transgender people have attempted suicide.

It is clear there is a mental health epidemic in the LGBTQ community. Despite these staggering numbers of mental illness, the mental health system has largely failed the LGBTQ community. As late as 1973, homosexuality was included in the DSM, meaning being gay or bisexual was considered a mental disorder. This precedent still hangs over mental health community both in intolerance shown by the continued use of harmful conversion therapies, as well as simple lack of knowledge and ability to manage the unique challenges LGBTQ people face. This creates a stressful and potentially damaging situation in the places that are supposed to help and support the people who seek their care.

At the Grand Rapids Pride Center, we already host a number of support groups for LGBTQ people to come together and share experiences. We would like to extend our mission and support of our community in Grand Rapids by providing short term knowledgeable counseling to members of the LGBTQ community who need it, when they need it, as well as guiding people towards affirming long term care providers in the area. In this way, more people can get the help they need at the time they need it, and be more likely to find a long term solution in a reasonable amount of time.

Navigating the mental health system can be confusing and frustrating for any patient. With the added pressures LGBTQ people face of wondering if they will be accepted by their care providers, or feeling that they need to hide their identity to receive equal treatment, this is even more difficult, and can lead to not getting the care they need. This is why it is so important to provide counseling and referrals to centers that are known to be affirming and knowledgeable of LGBTQ identities. This continues our mission of support and helps people in our community to healthier and happier lives.

### **Program Goals and Objectives**

The goal of starting this program is to reduce the occurrence of untreated mental health in the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community by providing short term support from licensed counselors as well as increasing access to long term mental health care options for the LGBTQ community in Grand Rapids by recommending affirming providers of long term care. Our success will be measured by:

- 90% approval rating of our counselors
- 70% of those that pursue long term care stay with their provider for at least 3 months
- 50% reduction in untreated mental illness over the next 5 years

### **Methods**

The Grand Rapids Pride Center is a place for the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community to come together and find support. We host multiple social and support groups for LGBTQ people with the mission to empower the LGBTQ community through supportive services and awareness. In 2015, 1500 people attended our 150 social and support group meetings and special events.

Pride Support aims to offer short term counseling from licensed mental health professionals as well as increase ease of access to mental health services for the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community. We hope to offer short term counseling with a 90% approval rating from patrons in the first year of this program. We also hope to reduce the number of people in the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community with untreated mental illness by 50% by 2021. We will do this and track our success in the following ways.

#### Within 1 Month

- Hire a program coordinator to lead this program
- Hire two licensed mental health professionals who are very familiar with, if not a part of the LGBTQ community.
- Create and administer an online pre-survey of patrons to the Pride Center of general mental health as well as attitudes towards mental illness and the mental health system
- Create basic promotional materials including an email to our mailing list as well as flyers to hang in the Pride Center
- Create an office space in the Pride Center for private counseling sessions
- Enlist volunteers and staff members to seek out local mental health centers that are affirming towards LGBTQ identities to add to our list of recommended options

#### Within 3 Months

- Brief our office assistant and other staff members on confidentiality
- Begin walk in hours and scheduled appointments with the mental health professionals
- Create a schedule for returning patron appointments while maintaining walk in hours for new patrons
- Maintain an updated list of affirming long term care options

#### Within 1 Year (and continuing annually)

- Create and administer an online post survey of those who have used our program of satisfaction with our counseling service

- Create and administer an online post survey of those who have used our counseling and recommendation of satisfaction the long term care option they found, if any
- Create and administer an online annual survey of patrons to the Pride Center of general mental health as well as attitudes towards mental illness and the mental health system
- Analyze results of surveys and post results as well as consider areas for improvement

### **Evaluation**

Through our counseling and referral service, we hope to provide counseling with a 90% approval rating, help find effective long term care for those who desire it with 70% staying with their chosen care provider for at least 3 months. Through this program, our goal is to decrease the occurrence of untreated mental illness in the LGBTQ community members who visit the center by 50% over a 5 year period. To evaluate the success of our program, our office staff and volunteers will be creating and conducting online surveys of people who have gone through the program as well as general community members at the center.

These surveys will ask people who have gone through or are currently in Pride Support to rate their experience with questions such as:

- How knowledgeable the counselors seemed in handling LGBTQ specific problems
- In general, how helpful the counseling was
- How likely they are to continue treatment with a long term care provider
- An open box for testimonials and/or suggestions for improvement

There will also be a survey of participants assessing general mental health and coping strategies before and after they have completed our short term counseling as well as annual updates for the time they are seeing a long term care provider. We will offer the option on these surveys to include a testimonial of their experience with our counseling service and the referrals we gave.

We will conduct annual surveys beginning before the start of the program. These surveys will assess general mental health and coping strategies of regular visitors to the center.

Through these surveys and testimonials, we will assess the effectiveness of our counseling, the quality of our referrals, and the general mental health status of our community. The results of these surveys will be analyzed by our office staff and volunteers at the center and used to see if we have met our goals and to find areas with room for improvement. These results and select testimonials will also be available on our website to track the progress of the program. We will also be collecting data on how many people we serve through this program, how long the average person stays with our counseling service, and what percentage of people go on to long term care options.

### Budget and Funding Requirements

The total budget required to support the Grand Rapids Pride Center's Pride Support program for one year amounts to \$194,027. This includes:

#### Direct Costs

Item	Number	Annual Total
Counseling psychologist salary	2	\$145,080
Program coordinator salary	1	\$41,825
Printing costs for flyers	50	\$40
		Total: \$186,945

#### Indirect Costs

Item	Percentage for Program	Annual Total
Building Cost	5%	\$3,210
Insurance	5%	\$510
Office Assistant Salary	10%	\$3,362
		Total: \$7,082

#### We expect to receive support from

Source	Percentage for Program	Annual Total
Volunteer office assistant	10%	\$3,362
Corporate sponsorships of operation costs	5%	\$3,720
		Total: \$7,082

We are requesting an additional \$186,945 to support the additional personnel of this program for a one year period. We hope to use this period to build a viable program that will attract corporate sponsors. This type of corporate sponsorship from local businesses currently provides funding for much of our general operation costs as well as many of our other programs such as our youth support group which is supported by SpeakEZ Lounge and our supportive business pages which is supported by EHTC Business Consultants.

### Justifications

#### **Counseling psychologist salary-** \$72,540 (x2)

Because of the specialized training counseling psychologists receive, they both are vital to the success of this program and require higher compensation than less trained professionals. This salary is the median salary for counseling psychologists and fair compensation for their services. Responsibilities will include setting their appointments as well as weekly walk in hours and providing short term counseling and referrals for further treatment at LGBTQ friendly mental health centers.

#### **Program coordinator salary-** \$41,825

The Program coordinator is a vital part of this program. Our current staff is very involved in their own duties, and do not have time to invest the amount of attention this program needs, especially in the early stages. This amount covers the salary and benefits of a program coordinator for one year. Responsibilities will include leading the organizational and PR aspects of the program, as well as the creation, administration, and analysis of the evaluation surveys, and keeping the referral center list updated.

#### **Flyer cost-** \$40

This is based on the price of printing flyers at Staples, which is \$18.99 for 25 flyers. These flyers will be hung in the center to create awareness of this program when it is first available.

#### **Indirect costs**

Facility cost such as electricity, building maintenance, and insurance are calculated at 5% as this program takes a small amount of building time and resources compared to our social groups. The office assistant salary is calculated at 10% as they will be assisting with scheduling and occasional other logistic matters as they arise.

## **Qualifications**

The Grand Rapids Pride Center was founded in 1987 when a group of people returning from the march on Washington for lesbian and gay rights wanted to continue to build community and achieve equality. They began holding informal meetings in homes and supportive businesses. Over the years, the Pride Center has grown dramatically. In the 1990s we moved to our current building and began offering more formal social groups and events. We are currently a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with the mission to empower our LGBTQ Community through supportive services and awareness. We do this through:

- Social and support groups
  - In 2015 there were more than 1500 participants in our social and support groups
- Our LGBTQ friendly business directory
- The annual Grand Rapids Pride Festival
- 3 Advisory committees
  - The Trans and Gender Nonconforming Committee
  - The Grand Rapids Pride Festival Committee
  - The Medical Advisory Committee
- The Clothes Closet
  - A resource for transgender people to receive gender-appropriate clothing
- LGBTQ career development program
  - A 6-class program designed to help LGBTQ people build their careers
- Safe and Supported
  - A Program designed to help families during the coming out process and reduce LGBTQ youth homelessness
- LGBTQ health care awareness
  - In November of 2015 alone, we presented to over 200 students at their schools and 60+ Health Care Professionals on LGBTQ issues and support.

We are the only major nonprofit in Grand Rapids that focuses on supporting the LGBTQ community. Through our social and support groups, we provide one of the only places in Grand Rapids that LGBTQ people can be unafraid to be themselves and spend time with people who have similar experiences. We are largely supported by financial donations from businesses in the community that are supportive both of our organization and our cause.

In 2015, 40% of our 1500 participants were in the youth group (ages 13-17) or the young adult group (ages 18-24). The age range of 13-24 is when mental illnesses often develop. With the added pressures associated with being LGBTQ in our society, LGBTQ people of all ages are nearly 3 times more likely than their straight, cisgender peers to experience mental health problems such as major depression or anxiety disorders. It is crucial that we ensure that people in our community get the mental health care they deserve.

### **Conclusion**

LGBTQ people are more likely to experience mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety but also can have a hard time finding appropriate mental health care. We are asking for \$186,945 to start our program, Pride Support. This program will provide members of the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community with free short term counseling and referrals to long term care providers.

We aim to provide counseling with a 90% approval rating, recommend long term options with whom 70% of the people who enter after a referral stay with for at least 3 months, and reduce the occurrence of untreated mental illness in the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community by 50% over the next 5 years. The Grand Rapids Pride Center is a longstanding nonprofit organization with many successful programs already in operation. We are well qualified to start this program and meet the needs of our community. Thank you again for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.