Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Astor Services for Children & Families

Project Title: Astor Services for Children & Families Broadband Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

_____**Executive Summary**_____

Astor Services for Children & Families - Executive Summary

Who will use and who will benefit from our increased broadband capacity as a result of this grant?

Astor Services for Children & Families is a community based, non-profit organization that provides mental health and welfare services as well as early childhood development programs to over 6,000 children and their families annually. Over 700 + staff will utilize the increased availability of our current IT system as a result of the funding from this stimulus grant that will benefit these families in our care. Our consumers and our staff reside primarily in New York State's Hudson Valley region and the Bronx. We provide a variety of services at over 30 locations.

Seventy-five children with severe psychological and behavioral disorders reside at the Astor Home for Children in Rhinebeck, New York. We operate and/or collaborate with school systems to provide alternative settings (day treatment) that provide a combination of education and counseling services. We operate outpatient clinics, non-secure detention facilities and collaborate with the juvenile justice system.

Additionally, we are the sole contractor for Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Dutchess County. The populations we serve are primarily low-income and a large percentage of our services are provided in rural areas.

Challenges and Solutions:

It is no doubt clear by now, that the information Astor stores electronically must adhere to the highest HIPPA standards. Furthermore, the highest standards of Medicaid compliance and timely/accurate accounting are all dependent on the quality of the IT system.

Our program growth has far surpassed the capacity of our IT infrastructure which became painfully evident with frequent server crashes and loss of information and/or time. We have endeavored over the last two years to make critical upgrades to our cumbersome IT infrastructure. We began by developing a long term plan for our IT system which includes hiring an IT Director as well as securing and prioritizing funding to implement the plan. We have been able to access legislative funding that assisted us to install VM Ware, a system that allows us to operate unlimited virtual servers and ease the burden on our network system.

Going forward, we must begin implementation of the Electronic Health Record (EHR). This will not be an option. The 2009 economic stimulus package passed by Congress aims to give incentives to adopt EHR systems and eventually reduce Medicaid payments to those who do not, which could have serious ramifications for Astor. On the upside, the full implementation of an EHR will have powerful implications for Astor's continued commitment to excellence of clinical service. EHRs have the potential to improve our ability to provide evidence based and best practices to children and families through automated measurement of clinical outcomes fed back to the clinician in real time.

We are applying for broadband stimulus funds to complete additional upgrades critical to the function of our IT infrastructure as soon as possible in order to continue provision of quality and reliable services to the children and families we serve. We must replace the current connector lines between PC and the mainframe servers. We will purchase increased bandwith, install enhanced pipeline at each location and upgrade to the next level of VM Ware with an ESX hyperviser to increase the network storage and reliability capacity as well upgrading our Storage Attached Network (SAN). Training staff is an important part of our implementation as well as engaging the assistance of consultants as necessary.

Additionally, we need to increase the capability of our clinicians and billing staff to utilize computers in documentation and reporting. We are requesting laptop systems so efficiency and accuracy is increased as staff travels among varied and sometimes non-traditional physical locations, e.g., homes and classrooms.

Astor's approach is both proactive and innovative in addressing IT infrastructure issues that are less than sufficient to support the reporting and procedural standards necessary to create a quality environment of care for our children and families. We have successfully implemented on a smaller scale the items we are requesting in this grant by utilizing cutting edge technologies such as VM Ware Virtual Servers and creating an environment others may use to enhance capacity, compliance and ultimately be prepared for the implementation of Electronic Health Records.

This grant will allow us to re-direct funds for infrastructure needs to hire an IT Director and sustain at least two IT support positions. Errors in reporting related to Medicaid can result in suspensions and citations. This grant will assist us to provide our staff with the resources and training needed to excel and maintain their positions.

Overall cost of the project is estimated at $ 354125.