

PROJECT TITLE:

*KAJSIAB HOUSE PROJECT
TO IMPROVE HMONG STUDENTS'
ATTENDANCE AND GRADUATION
RATES IN THE
Madison Metropolitan School District*

Applicant/Agency Name: Mental Health Center of Dane County,
Inc.

Program: Kajsiab House Program

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Amount Request: \$50,000

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The Kajsia House Program at the Mental Health Center of Dane County (MHCDC) proposes the development of an after school project to work with our Hmong children and their parents in the Hmong community, who are suffering from intergenerational conflict caused by acculturation and adjustment problems in this new society. The violence and loss of homeland and culture experienced by Hmong adults have made it difficult if not possible for Hmong parents to communicate with their children effectively. The Kajsia House program (KH) is most concerned about the Hmong school children who are truant, who are at risk of dropping out of school, who are involved with the legal system, and who turned against their parents.

The KH thus proposes:

1. To develop an after school Qeej program for 40 Hmong student ages 7 to 17 years old. The program will be equally divided between boys and girls, and the parents will participate and be committed to the Qeej program. This will assist parents in developing parenting skills and communication skills.
2. To develop a working relationship with and cultural competency training for school staff. These will assist the school staff to better serve Hmong children in the school system.
3. To provide peer-to-peer support groups and individual case management for children 13 to 19 year old, who are truant and at risk of dropping out of school.

These goals are to assist Hmong student to stay in school and to improve their attendance in school. The Madison School District has found that Hmong students have the worst attendance record in the Madison School District among middle and high schools. The Kajsia House, located at 3518 Memorial Dr., on the Mendota Mental Health Institute grounds, is a friendly and quiet place to work with Hmong children.

The project proposes to hire a part time (.375FTE) staff 15 hours per week to work with students, their parents, and to provide cultural competency training to school staff; to contract with one or more Qeej instructors to provide Qeej instruction to 40 Hmong students; and to contract with Freedom, Inc. to case manage and to run after school peer support groups for truant and at-risk Hmong students.

This project will operate after school and weekend to address the needs of 80-100 or more Hmong school children ages 7 to 19 years old.

The KH is requesting \$50,000.

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Organization History And Profiles:

Kajsiab House is one of the 20 distinct programs of The Mental Health Center of Dane County (MHCDC), a nonprofit organization that is a nationally recognized leader in community-based mental health advocacy and treatment. Since its establishment in March of 2000, KH has become a safe haven for some of the 5000 Hmong Americans living in Dane County and an important resource for the service community at large. KH is a "home away from home" for 150 Hmong families with severe mental health needs and are extremely isolated in Dane County because of their inability to speak English and their difficulty assimilating into American society. KH's staff consist of 12 bilingual and bicultural highly trained Hmong and 3 American mental health professionals, one Madison Metropolitan School District staff, who works two days at KH. All are part of a team that is paving the way for the delivery of culturally competent services to Hmong refugees and families.

Kajsiab House Mission:

Kajsiab House's mission is to create a culturally respectful, and safe environment to promote a healthy Hmong community.

Kajsiab House has continued to provide numbers of cultural presentations and trainings to other Hmong programs throughout the United State. On the local level, Kajsiab House has a strong working relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work and the Psychiatry Departments, hospitals and clinics. KH was asked to present to the undergraduated and graduated social work students and medical students residency.

KH has a strong collaborative working relationship with the Madison Metropolitan School district since the inception of the Kajsiab House program in 2000. Choua Her, a staff of the Madison School District, has an office at Kajsiab House. She works there two days per week to assist Hmong families with their school children to resolve school issues.

KH also assisted the Madison Children's Museum in developing the "Hmong At Heart" traveling exhibit funded by the Freedom Foundation.

The Mental Health Center of Dane County in Madison has been providing mental health services to the Southeast Asian refugee population, Hmong, Laotians, and Cambodian since March 1990.

The Mental Health Center enjoyed some early success in offering accessible mental health services to refugee populations. This was evidenced by the increasing demand for such services among population that previously avoided contact with mental health agencies. In its second year of existence, the Project received a Community Program Award from the Wisconsin Community Development Society for its efforts in providing "accessible and acceptable" culturally oriented services to the Southeast Asian community. Client numbers continued to increase.

Currently, KH is running a successful Qeej class one day per week to 25 Hmong school students at KH.

Program Narrative And Needs:

Demographic and population to be served. There are about 4,000 - 5,000 Hmong living in Dane County. Approximately 1,200 or more children enrolled in the Madison School district.

The KH program of the Mental Health Center has worked with the Hmong population for more than 5 years. It is clear that most of the Hmong families we are working with have post traumatic stress condition and depression that frequently interrupts their children's schooling and daily lives. Most children from these families are also having depression conditions that have never been addressed. Most important of all, Hmong children are lacking the role models that they can look to for support and guidance both in the school and in the community.

Hundreds of Hmong children are turning against their parents and disrespect their parents because these parents usually do not speak English. The lack of understanding of the culture and legal system in this new society also interfered Hmong parents' ability to assimilate quickly enough to keep pace with their children. The intergenerational conflict is one of the most pressing issues among Hmong parents and children in the Hmong community. When children lack respect for their parents, they will not attend schools, nor come home. They simply hang out with peers and skip schools, and sometimes get themselves into legal trouble.

The majority of Hmong parents came to this country without formal education, most of them were unable to read and write even in their native language. Thus it is impossible for them to help their children at home. They are not like well educated Americans who know how to direct or plan their children's education and assist their children's studies at home. Hmong parents very much rely on school staff, teachers, and administrators to teach their children. Whatever children can learn at school then that is what they will get.

Language and cultural sensitivity is an important part in working with Hmong children. It is important that staff understand the culture in order to communicate more effectively with Hmong parents. Sometimes messages can be interpreted in many deferent ways, which can lead to misunderstanding of the intent of the missions and goals of both families and school system. This will have a great impact on school staff, parents and children's relationships. Services will not be fully implemented. With a staff of KH who can work closely to provide cultural trainings to the school district and to update school staff the current issues affecting Hmong children and parents, we hope that many miscommunications can be avoided and that parents will trust the staff and communicate with them fully. This will improve the relationships between school and parents and will also assist the school district in developing their curriculums and techniques to teach Hmong children.

More and more Hmong children are getting themselves involved with the Juvenile Justice System everyday. They often commit petty theft and are using drugs at an early age, something that Hmong parents did not see in their country before coming to the United States. 12 and 13 years old boys and girls have joined gangs and run away for weeks. Those Hmong culture specific problems have not been addressed successfully in the school system, city, state or federal levels. There is no agency in Dane County that is willing to address this problem because of the lack of resources and understanding of the Hmong culture. Some local agencies have tried unsuccessfully to address this issue

because they do not have enough culturally competent staff. Our experience tells us that these children are also suffering from PTSD and depression passed on to them by their parents who are severely mentally ill or were victims of torture before coming to this country. Children are directly affected by their daily exposure to their parents' condition. It is difficult to adjust to the new world while children live in homes where parents are unable to help or provide assistance and direction. Communication between parents and children are broken down because children can not get the support that they are seeking for from parents. Children are caught between the two worlds: the way and life style in the American culture, and the way and life style and status that expectation of their parents who still strongly belief in their traditional life style that children must obey and listen to parents and adults. Children here found themselves to be unfit for either world.

There are many factors hindering Hmong students' performance in schools. These include cultural values, family issues, behavioral issues, racism, discrimination, cognitive ability, and peer pressure. We will take this into account when working with Hmong children in improving their educational success and attendance. There are two major standards use by most schools to measure a child's school performance. These are grade and attendance. KH project intends to implement the following activities to improve both.

Qeej classes. Parents of children who are enrolled at the Qeej program will be asked to be active participants with the program. Qeej classes have experienced a success in keeping Hmong students in school and improving their attendance rates. KH has implemented the Qeej program at KH for three years. The attendance rates were consistent at 25 children at every class session. There were at least 15 parents accompanying their children to every Qeej class. Some parents stayed with their children until the end of the sessions, others came back to pick up their children after the sessions.

Qeej is a Hmong musical instrument played by Hmong adults at the New Year celebrations, weddings, cultural events, public performance, and the funeral services. Qeej is orally taught so children must use their memorization and concentration to learn the instrument. Research has shown that music improved children's learning.

In 2002, KH started the Qeej class with 8 Hmong children and has increased enrollment to 30 children, all boys; 5 dropped out of the program. With their parents' commitment and support, 25 children continue to come to the classes regularly. The children who participated in the Qeej program continued to maintain in school and attend school. Of the 25 children, 10-12 are now able to perform at their highest level that they can fully perform at the funeral services which involved complicated processes without any mistakes that can cause tensions and dissatisfaction to the families and relatives of the deceased. The rest of the 25 children were able to assist and perform at other events and shows such as the Hmong New Years celebration and community events.

Qeej is an instrument played mostly by males. Because of the level of support and commitment from Hmong parents for Hmong boys, we are proposing to expand this Qeej class to Hmong girls to give them the same opportunity that many Hmong boys enjoyed for the past years. We are hoping to have the same support and commitment from parents for girls as well as boys for the Qeej classes. We are also hoping to see many Hmong girls perform at the funeral services and other events in the next one to two years. This will not only improve their school attendance but it will raise self-esteem and confidence in girls. Hmong girls will feel proud of themselves in assisting to preserve one of the

most important cultural pieces in Hmong history. Already there are Hmong girls who can perform the Qeej instruments in other big cities such as the Twin cities, Minnesota and Fresno, California. Teaching and having Hmong girls who can play this important instrument in the Madison School District will give Hmong girls the confidence that has eluded them for years. KH program is sure that this will be a major change in many girls' self imposed limitations. Hmong girls will have more courage in pursuing their dreams. Also, most importantly, to see many Hmong girls perform at events and funeral services will set new role models for many younger girls in the Hmong families and community. This change will have a great impact in the Hmong children's future education and career choices.

During the Qeej instructions, the instructors will implement the cultural values to teach Hmong boys and girls the values of Hmong culture and how they should and must behave before adults and respect for parents and adults. The importance of education and communication will also be part of the instruction for parents as well as children.

With this Qeej program, parents will be asked to participate in a one hour discussion once or twice per month about their children's education, how to communicate with their children, and how to plan for their children's education.

Cultural training. Hundreds of Hmong children and families have been living in the United States for two to three decades and new Hmong families have recently arrive from the Refugee Camp in Thailand. KH has been working with Hmong families for more than 5 years; we have experienced the new emerging problems as well as continued to work with the existing adjustment and transitional problems that existed since the Hmong families first came to the United States.

KH employs professional staff with experience and knowledge of the Hmong children's current and past problems and the level of difficulty Hmong families and children face in adapting to the changing mainstream American educational system. To be able to effectively work with Hmong families and children, school staff must be provided new information of the current problems and conflicts that Hmong families and children face in addition to what had been provided to them earlier when first contacted Hmong children. KH thus is proposing to use this opportunity to work with the Madison School District to create a better educational system that serves Hmong students and their parents. Through this grant from the Madison school District, KH will work with school staff to develop cultural competence training that can be presented through school's in-services and workshops to assist school staff to better understand and better develop teaching instructions and curriculum to work with Hmong children and their families.

Kajsiab House will provide two to three workshops or trainings to 100-200 school staff per year.

Peer support and case management. The goals of the peer-to-peer support groups and case management are to decrease truancy, drop out rates, and criminal activities by providing case management, educational workshops, youth advocacy, and community education the current issues and problems that Hmong youth face at school. These activities will help Hmong students to become more involved in the schools, their communities, and their families. Most importantly, these activities are intended to

provide resources and support so that Hmong students will feel less isolated, have more resources, and become better students. This project is will serve:

At least 50 or more Hmong students/youth will contact Freedom, Inc. for services. Of the 50, at least 30 will participate in at least one of the youth support groups. Of the 30, at least 15 students will achieve at least two of the milestones under goal three, outcome one, number three below.

Freedom Inc., will provide two important activities as part of this proposal:

1. To provide case management to at risk/high risk youths, especially teens, ages 13-19 years old. (At risk/High risk: this includes teens who have or will drop out of school, high truancy history, victims of sexual and domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, teen mothers and wives, and most important of all, those who are in the juvenile justice system.) Through case management we could provide resources, support services, academic tutoring, crisis intervention, family mediation, alternatives to education, career counseling and advocacy for at risk students and their families.
2. To provide peer-to-peer support groups for teens. Freedom, Inc. will coordinate support groups for teens who are struggling in the school system to provide a safe space for teens to learn, share, and develop strategies to support them in their academic, family, community, and personal issues. Freedom, Inc. will also provide on-going leadership training and community awareness trainings/workshops. All the participants will go through Freedom, Inc.'s 2 months youth leadership training. Trainings and workshops will consist of self-esteem builders, community issues, anti-oppression training, public speaking, presentation, and advocacy training. Participants will work on becoming stronger students. Students will be encouraged to attend National and local leadership trainings and workshops.

Freedom, Inc.'s staff, volunteers and participants will provide information through workshops and presentations to community agencies, leaders, school officials, law enforcements, and other service providers about issues faced by Hmong students, particularly high-risk students. At least 3-6 workshops and presentations will be conducted to reach out and educate the community of the current problems Hmong children are facing. The rationale behind these trainings' outreaching efforts is to gain support and understanding from Hmong parents. If parents and children are communicating better, Hmong children's school attendance will surely improve.

Goal and Outcomes:

The Kajsia House program will implement the following goals and outcomes:

Goals One: To implement a Qeej class for 40 Hmong students, 20 boys and 20 girls age 7-17 years old.

Outcome One:

1. Classes will meet after school for instructions twice per week 2 hours each session.
2. 20 boys and 10 or more girls will participate in the Qeej instructions.

3. Parents will have full commitment and participation.
4. 90% of students will improve their school attendance.

Should address only the ones with poor attendance

Outcome two:

1. 15- 20 parents will meet once or twice per month.
2. 15 - 20 parents will learn new skills how to communicate with their children.
3. 15 - 20 parents will have better understanding of their children's current issues and problems at school. *— how do you measure?*
4. 100% of parents' participated will values their children's education. *— how do you measure?*

Outcome three:

1. Hmong girls will show improvement in self-esteem and confidence. *— how do you measure*
2. 5 Hmong girls will be able to perform at the highest level.
3. All Hmong girls participated in Qeej class will be able to perform at events and show in the community.
4. Hmong parents will show more support for Hmong girls in learning Qeej instruments and to perform at public events. *— how to measure*

Goal Two: To develop a working relationship and cultural trainings for school staff.

Outcomes:

1. Develop and provide two to three cultural Trainings for 100-150 School staff per year.
2. 100-150 school staff will have a better understanding of the new problems affecting Hmong children and their families in the school system. *— how measure*
3. School staff will improve their curriculum and instructions in teaching Hmong children. *— how to measure*
4. School system will have a better working relationship with the Hmong community. *— how to measure*

Goal Three: To provide peer-to-peer support group and case management for Hmong students ages 13-19 years old.

Outcome one:

1. 50 students will contact Freedom, Inc. for services *— this put the burden on the kids not on Freedom Inc.*
2. 30 will participated in at least one of the youth program support groups.
3. 15 students will achieve at least two of the following milestones:
 - o Feel less isolated in school.
 - o Be more confident in their personal and academic lives.
 - o Be enrolled in school or return to school to achieve their G.E.D
 - o Feel more comfortable in communicating with their parents.
 - o Have one or more career/educational options after high school.
 - o Be less involved in the juvenile justice system.
 - o Have better communication and relationships with other students.
 - o Can identify at least one adult in school that they feel conformable and trust.
 - o Can identify at least two community agencies or people they can turn to for assistance.

- Increase in school attendance
- Increase in school participation.
- Increase in their grade point average.
- Decrease or stop drug and alcohol abuse.

Implementation/Project Methodology:

The program will have one part-time Hmong cultural broker, .375 FTE for Kajsiab House, one or more contracted Qeej instructors, 24 hours per week, a contract for services with Freedom, Inc to provide peer-to-peer support group and case management for Hmong youth. All of the accounting and administrative duties will be supported by the Mental Health Center of Dane County. This program will serve approximately 80-100 Hmong students who are currently enrolled in elementary to high schools in Dane County. We expect to see a high level of participation from Hmong students with the full support from Hmong parents. The activities will be conducted after school and on weekend two or more times per week.

The success of the program will be measured in two ways: The first is by the total number of participants, school attendance, academic improvement, and graduation rates. The goal is to serve a total of 80-100 Hmong students. Our second measure is the number of troubled students who will assume responsibility to participate in employment and who plan to pursue higher education in university, college, and technical schools. We are hoping to see a high percentage of high school senior students graduating with their classes. More Hmong students pursuing higher education will be an important measure of success of the project. The project will work closely with the school system to keep records or copies of students' report cards and attendance records from their respective schools in the program to monitor their progress and success in school.

This project will coordinate with the Mental Health Center of Dane County, Adolescent and family Unit for support and consultation. It is our understanding that some of the students and youth that will be served by this project will be referred from the Juvenile Justice Department, Dane County Human Services, and schools, it is important that the Project should work closely with the above mentioned agencies to keep them inform of the activities and programs that will be implemented at the KH for Hmong youth in Dane County. Ongoing meetings with other agencies that have provided services to Hmong youth, such as bootstrap, United Refugee Services, and child and family unit at the Mental Health Center should be consulted on a regular basis.

Budget Form & Budget Narrative

**Mental Health Center of Dane County, Inc
Kajsiab House
Madison Metropolitan School Grant Proposal
2006**

Staffing

Position	FTE	Annual	Total
Clinical Specialist	0.375	38,000	14,250
Taxes & Benefits (21.5%)			3,064
Total Salary and Benefits			<u>17,314</u>

Other Operating Expenses

Contract Services			
Qeej instructors			15,360
Freedom Inc.			9,620
 Program Supplies			
Qeej Instruments, 20			4,000
 Rent/Occupancy			475
Insurance			202
Telephone			300
Outreach to Parents, postage & meetings			250
Travel			657
 Total direct expenses			<u>48,178</u>
 Indirect expenses			7,155
 Total Expenses			55,333
Agency In- Kind			<u>5,333</u>
Total Request			<u>\$ 50,000</u>

**Mental Health Center of Dane County, Inc
 Kajsab House- Budget Justification
 Madison Metropolitan School Grant Proposal
 2006**

Personnel

Bilingual Clinical Specialist .375 FTE cultural-broker will facilitate program, communication, and student/parent experience

Taxes and Benefits

FICA	7.65%
Health Insurance	7.17%
Workers Comp	0.19%
UC	0.19%
Pension/Life/Disability	6.30%
Total	<u>21.5%</u>

Contract Services

Qeej instructors 24 hrs./ week, \$16/hour, 40 weeks

Freedom Inc. Funding for peer support group and youth case management services for after school program.

Supplies

Qeej Instruments 20 instruments to support 2 classes of 20 students each.

Rent/Occupancy

Space and related costs required to staff position.

Travel

Mileage to transport/reimburse participants and staff as required.

Telephone/Internet

Cost of phone service and computer data lines.

Outreach

Cost of outreach and meetings with parents to educate and integrate them into the musical/ cultural program to ensure commitment for their children's participation while providing them with a cultural connection.

Staffing Plan And Project Management

Kajsiab House staff consist of highly trained Hmong and American professionals who are part of a team for that is paving the way for the delivery of culturally competent services to Hmong refugees and their families. KH staff includes: 1) Six Hmong full time professionals, cultural brokers/case managers who are bilingual/bicultural. Three hold bachelor's degree, three have masters degree; 2) One psychiatrist who is also a University of Wisconsin professor with over 10 years of experience treating elderly Hmong refugees; 3) One psychologist with over 20 years of treatment to the Southeast Asian refugee population. 4) Two full time and one half time Hmong, bilingual/bicultural, mental health aide, 5) One full time administrative Program Manager, and 6) Three regular volunteers who teaches English, American history, driver's education, sewing, healthy eating and food preparation, and Hmong language. Kajsiab House is also received administrative support, technical support, and financial support from its' parent organization, Mental Health Center of Dane County Inc.

Doua C. Vang, MS, Kajsiab House Program Manager MHCDC: Mr. Vang is bicultural, bilingual, and has worked in several program development and managerial levels of the Southeast Asian services provided by MHCDC. He has led the Kajsiab House project since 1999. Fluent in both speaking and writing English, Hmong, Lao and Thai, Mr. Vang has acted as a bilingual resource specialist since 1984 for the Madison Metropolitan School District, is professionally affiliated with the Wisconsin Minority Leadership Program, services specialist for the Department of Workforce Development, and Board President of the United Refugee Services. Mr. Vang is also the publisher and editor of Wisconsin Hmong Life, a monthly periodical of news and events affecting the Hmong community in Wisconsin. Given his countless hours of translation for people who otherwise were not served, he is highly regarded among Hmong leadership and common folk alike, and is well connected to the power structure. He has the trust of and is considered credible among the clans and mainstream decision makers necessary to lead this project.

Fred Coleman, M.D., is a psychiatrist who is revered and admired among the Southeast Asian people in Dane County. He is a staff with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical School. He has been working with the Mental Health Center of Dane County Inc., since 1988. Dr. Coleman sees most of Kajsiab House elders. He also provides weekly consultation for Kajsiab House staff regarding client case issues. He has a breadth of knowledge about both western and eastern medical perspective. He is respectful of all points of view when offering explanations or making recommendations. Dr. Coleman has years of experienced working with Hmong families who were affected by the transition and adjustment problems while tried to assimilate into the American mainstream society.

Dr. Roger Garms received his Ph.D. Degree in Psychology from the Purdue University in 1974. He served as an assistant professor of psychology at the University of South Carolina for 3 years, then worked 12 years as chief psychologist then clinical coordinator at a community mental health center in Illinois. He saw more than 300 American veterans with PTSD and also ran a veteran's group for 10 years. Dr. Garms has established a private practice in addition to his day job at the Mental Health Center of Dane County.

Dr. Garms is one of the co-founders of the Kajsiab House project. He continues to put energy and time to make sure that Hmong families receive the needed services.

Dr. Garms has presented at numerous conferences and workshops and also supervises clinicians working with this population at the Mental Health Center of Dane County.

Ms. Pa Dou Vang, MSW, Clinical Specialist: Ms. Vang is an indigenous Hmong social worker who is one of a two women team that runs the Kajsiab House "Hmong Sister Group." Ms. Vang provides case management, cultural brokering, and counseling to Hmong elders. Ms. Vang has over 3 years of clinical and community services. She also develops and produces quarterly reports to grant funders. PaDou has presented at many conferences around the United States and at the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Social Work, Department of Psychiatry, and Medical Residency Program.

Ms. Pa Thao, MSW, Clinical Specialist: Ms. Thao is an indigenous Hmong social worker and is a part of a two women team that runs the Kajsiab House "Hmong Sister Group." Ms. Thao provides case management, cultural brokering, and counseling to Hmong elders. Ms. Thao has over 5 years of clinical and community services.

Other Clinicians:

Mai Yang, BA, Clinical Specialist: 15 years of clinical and social services experiences

Cher Khoua Yang, AA, Clinical Specialist: 20 years of combined social and clinical experiences. Community leader.

Yang Yang, BA, Clinical Specialist: 15 years of combined social and clinical experiences.

Staff providing supervision/consultation and evaluation to the KH program: