Seeds of Strength Grant Proposal  
January 2014

1. Organization Description
Young, Scared, Pregnant. These three words describe the women who come to Annunciation Maternity Home (AMH), hopeful for a new beginning. Founded in 2001, the mission of Annunciation Maternity Home is to provide women and teens in crisis pregnancies, and their children, with housing, educational opportunities, and access to health services to empower them in their journey towards independence and self-sufficiency. The vision of the Annunciation Maternity Home is to be a center offering all young women and teens experiencing a crisis pregnancy, and their children, the opportunity for a new life.

Annunciation Maternity Home was founded by Deacon Michael and Christie Aaronson to follow an inspirational calling for an essential service needed in this community. Beginning with one residential home housing a single client, AMH has grown into a campus that includes housing and support services for up to 26 clients, and their children. Serving young women ages 12 and older for up to two years after the birth of the baby, AMH provides programs and services to each client to help her overcome the obstacles created by her pregnancy. Each client accepted into the AMH program is required to take part in the programs and services that fit her needs, including:

- The University of Texas Charter High School
- Access to Medical Care
- Individual and Group Parenting Classes
- Life Skills Classes
- Job Assistance
- Transportation
- Infant Development Center
- Individual and Family Counseling
- Volunteer & Mentor Program
- Adoption Education / Referral
- Community Outreach
- Walk-In Counseling
- Follow-Up

Through the use of these programs and services, the ultimate goal of Annunciation Maternity Home is to provide clients with the knowledge, skills, and education needed to become independent, self-sufficient individuals and good mothers, whether they decide to parent or develop an adoption plan. Goals for clients at Annunciation Maternity Home include:

**Short-Term:**
- Create a nurturing home environment.
- Meet residents' basic needs: shelter, nutrition, health care, transportation, and clothing.
- Create a home free of domestic violence, abuse, and neglect.
- Promote the healthy development and nurturing of each child.
- Improve the self esteem of each client.
- Enable all clients to attend school.
- Enable all adult clients to attain employment.
- Prepare residents to manage daily tasks: home care, budgeting, meal planning, resisting peer pressure, conflict resolution and developing strategies to adapt to life's challenges.
- Conduct outreach to fathers and extended families when appropriate.
Long-Term:
- Transitioning clients can access economic, housing, and emotional support, as needed.
- Clients will make positive life changes.
- Clients will have an adequate support system of family and peers.
- Clients will have decreased instances of domestic violence, abuse, and neglect.
- Clients will model healthy parenting techniques.
- Client’s child will be school-ready (reduced developmental delays, behavioral/health issues).
- Clients will graduate from high school on-time and enroll in a post-secondary education.
- Clients will be employed in a career position.
- Clients will model basic life management skills.
- AMH will provide a positive alternative to abortion and help clients avoid repeat pregnancies.

Annunciation Maternity Home’s strategic objectives for the next five years include: (1) strengthen board governance structure, (2) diversify and increase funding, (3) develop transitional housing, and (4) strengthen life skill program. While objectives #1 and #2 improve the organization's operating structure for long-term service delivery, objectives #3 and #4 ensure lasting, meaningful change by improving programs to better serve the ever-changing needs of clients and the community.

AMH is uniquely qualified to serve our client demographic in the greater Georgetown Area because of our status as the only long-term residential facility in Central Texas, and one of the few in the State of Texas, licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to provide free services for young women who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy. Since inception, AMH has served over 750 women and children.

2. Grant Purpose
Annunciation Maternity Home seeks to expand our individual and family counseling services through the addition of a staffed, full-time Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) to provide meaningful individual, family, and group counseling. Funding from Seeds of Strength will be used to address the financial needs associated with improving the AMH counseling program to ensure the highest quality of mental health services to our clients.

3. Details of Grant Request
The majority of clients served at Annunciation Maternity Home are from low-income households, and 100% of clients have experienced trauma, including neglect, abandonment, homelessness, substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or school truancy problems. The unstable living environments experienced during their formative years often become a driving force behind poor decision making, therefore generating a great need to professionally address events and modify behavior in order to create long-term, positive life changes. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), individual and environmental risk factors that increase the likelihood of mental health problems include receiving public assistance, having unemployed or teenage parents, or being in the foster care system (qtd. in Stagman). Additionally, children and youth at increased risk for mental health problems include those in low-income households and those in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

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In 2013, Annunciation Maternity Home served a total of 70 clients, 39 in our Rita House (minors) and 31 in our Gabriel House (adults). Of the total number served, 95% percent were classified as low-income, 32% experienced juvenile probation, and 37% had experiences in the Child Welfare System. The NCCP reports that, when compared to the general population, 50% of children and youth in the child welfare system have mental health problems, and 67-70% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder (qtd. in Stagman).³

These mental health statistics are directly applicable to the clients served at Annunciation Maternity Home, and accurately depict the need for mental health services in the population served at AMH. Currently, AMH provides on-site counseling services through two Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) on a contract basis. The objective of the AMH counseling program is to provide a safe, judgement-free outlet for each client to discuss personal information, develop good decision making, and overcome past traumas. The first counseling session for each client includes an Intake Risk Assessment designed to target behaviors that pose a risk to themselves and others so a safety plan and placement evaluation can be developed. The LPCs visit AMH a total of three times per week, and through these visits provide each client with one hour of counseling per week (with the same LPC each visit). Financially, 75% of counseling sessions are reimbursable through Medicaid. However, many adult clients are not eligible for Medicaid post-partum, thus AMH assumes financial responsibility of sessions at $60 per hour. The success of the counseling program is currently measured by the case managers through the Monthly Action Plan (MAP), a document that monthly assesses the stability and improvements of various aspects of a client’s well being (educational, emotional, behavioral, therapeutic, spiritual, life skills, parenting/adoption, family, cultural, etc).

While the current counseling program is providing benefits to clients, program evaluations by AMH staff and clients have highlighted areas for improvement that can be addressed through the proposed program enhancement of hiring one full-time Licensed Professional Counselor dedicated to the mental health needs of all clients. Employing a full-time LPC who can be on the campus daily form 8am-5pm will allow clients to develop a closer bond with their counselor at a faster rate, allowing clients to be comfortable sharing information and receiving help, thus reaching greater counseling session effectiveness. While clients can stay at Annunciation for up to two years after the birth of the baby, the length of stay for each client will vary based on her situation. Without knowing the exact length of stay for each client, it is essential to address each client’s needs as effectively as possible from day one. While the objectives of the counseling program will not change, the primary goals of adding an LPC to the AMH staff will include: 1) offer consistent, meaningful individual counseling to each client, 2) offer flexible and immediate individual counseling sessions, 3) develop deeper relationships with clients through daily client interactions on campus, 4) earn client trust long-term, 5) by earning trust and developing a relationship, address client needs at a higher level than currently achieving, 6) incorporate group counseling sessions, 7) incorporate family counseling sessions, and 8) teach a life skills class (i.e. self-esteem building). Because of the MAP’s ability to consistently reveal the well-being and progress of each client, Annunciation will continue to utilize the MAP to evaluate the effectiveness of the counseling program. Additionally, AMH will utilize the comprehensive, research validated CAFAS tool (Child And Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale) used by mental health practitioners to provide comprehensive assessments, track outcomes, and make informed decisions about treatment and level of care.

Because each client served at Annunciation has experienced a traumatic or life-altering event, it is critical that each client receives quality mental health services as part of their comprehensive service delivery of becoming an independent, self-sufficient individual. The consequences of children and youth with

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untreated mental health problems include lower educational achievement, greater involvement with the
criminal justice system, and fewer stable and longer-term placements in the child welfare system than
their peers. However, when treated, children and youth with mental health problems fare better at home,
in schools, and in their communities. As a facility assisting young women experiencing a crisis
pregnancy, it becomes even more imperative to develop stability in mental health to improve the
outcomes of not only the life of each mother, but also her baby (for mothers choosing to parent). By
providing a holistic set of comprehensive resources to each client, Annunciation can help each mother
receive the tools she needs to reach long-term success for herself and for her family.

4. Organizational Information
Annunciation Maternity Home is located on 22.98 acres outside the city limits of Georgetown, Texas in
Williamson County. The agency is governed by a 10 member Board of Directors and staffed by 23
employees. The campus includes two residential homes with the capacity to house 26 clients, and their
children, and an Education Center housing The University of Texas Charter High School, the Infant
Development Center, a Life Skills Classroom, and administrative offices.

While the overall rate of teen pregnancy in Texas has decreased over the last 5 years, the most current
and comprehensive statistics available (2008) reported 76,400 teen pregnancies among girls age 15-19 in
Texas. Due to the unduplicated services provided by AMH, young women from all over the State of Texas
as well as many other states come to the Home for help. In 2013, 41% of clients served were from
Williamson and Travis Counties, 56% were from Central Texas, and 5% were from outside of Texas.
Annunciation Maternity Home provides intake priority to young women residing in Williamson County,
then bases intake decisions on those with the greatest need.

The need to assist young, single mothers is of vital importance to our community and our society. Teen
mothers are less likely to finish high school, more likely to rely on public assistance, more likely to be
poor as adults, and more likely to have children who have poorer educational, behavioral, and health
outcomes over the course of their lives than do kids born to older parents. As a result, teen childbearing
costs U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars due to lost tax revenue, increased public assistance payments, and
greater expenditures for public health care, foster care, and criminal justice services. To battle the
consequences of teen pregnancy, Annunciation Maternity Home provides the opportunity for each client
to continue educational goals, receive medical and mental health care, learn essential life skills, develop
strong parenting skills, obtain employment, receive quality child care services, and build a strong support
system. While 2013 outcomes measurements are still being processed, 2012 service delivery highlights
include 5,408 shelter nights, 230 free childcare days to 31 babies, 100% high school enrollment for
eligible clients, 1,936 academic tutoring hours, over 513 family counseling hours, and over 550
individual counseling hours. As a result, AMH was able to help 89 mothers and their children receive
free, safe housing, witness the healthy births of 18 babies, teach and model healthy parenting techniques
in a controlled environment, help students earn a collective total of 136 high school credits, and see 8
students earn their high school diploma and be ready for the next step in education and workforce.

As a child and family service organization, Annunciation Maternity Home strives to continuously
improve and strengthen our organizational foundation and service delivery with the goal of maintaining
the highest quality of service standards in every aspect of our program. Annunciation Maternity Home is
currently in the final stages of national accreditation as a family and group home through the Council on

Accreditation (COA), Incorporated in New York. COA accreditation is a national, objective validation of an organization’s performance. While the COA accreditation process involves a detailed review of an organization’s administrative, management, and service delivery functions against international standards of best practice, accreditation itself encourages services that are appropriate, coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, and that are provided by a skilled and supported workforce. The year-long process of achieving national accreditation is expected to be completed in March 2014.

5. Organizational Experience
For the past 13 years, Annunciation Maternity Home has worked to meet the needs of our community by helping young mothers become independent and self-sufficient members of society. Our program is reviewed, amended, and expanded upon frequently to ensure we can continue meeting the demands of our clients and our community. The residential State license (General Residential Operation) in which the Home operates under proves our program maintains the highest levels of standard and care. Additionally, Annunciation Maternity Home is currently awaiting final approval for licensing of our Infant Development Center as a childcare facility, and is in the final stages of national accreditation through COA. Referrals of clients from well-known area non-profits, schools, government agencies, and religious entities speak to the trust the community holds in our ability to deliver a high-quality, comprehensive program. Long-time financial, in-kind, and volunteer support from local businesses, organizations, and community members also upholds the results this community has seen in our clients and programs.

6. Staff and Management of Project
Executive Director Christie Aaronson is responsible for the day to day operations of the Home to insure compliance with licensing standards, and oversees the hiring, supervision, and scheduling of staff, the budget, program development and implementation, and outreach initiatives. Mrs. Aaronson holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a certification in non-profit management. As founder of Annunciation Maternity Home in 2001, she holds 13 years of experience in the operations of the Home and assessing the needs of the demographic served. Ms. Aaronson has played and continues to play an integral role in the ongoing development of the programs and services available to clients. As manager of the counseling program, she will oversee the service delivery and ability to meet program outcomes, and work in partnership with the Program Service Directors of each residential house on the campus (Rita and Gabriel) and the LPC to ensure each client is receiving the counseling services needed to meet her individual needs.

7. How this initiative helps meet our mission.
The AMH program is designed to provide each client with the tools she needs to be successful long-term, including programs for education, access to medical care, career planning, job acquisition, infant development (childcare), pregnancy care, parenting, adoption education, life skills, and case management. By elevating the level of the counseling program to the greatest possible standard, Annunciation can meet the mental health needs of our clients with greater effectiveness, model dedication to quality improvement, and achieve the highest level of excellence within our organization to ultimately benefit our clients and our community.

8.- 9. Board of Directors.
Annunciation Maternity Home receives 100% Board Member involvement in a monetary and/or service contribution capacity. At this time, no Board Members are from the population served.