



September 15, 2009

Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health
6701 Rockledge Drive
Room 1040-MSC 7710
Bethesda, MD 20892-7710

Re: Commitment Letter

Dear Committee Members,

I am honored to submit this letter of support for the Interventions and Practice Research Infrastructure Program (IP-RISP) grant submission with Wayne State University School of Social Work. Matrix Human Services, a Detroit-based private, nonprofit, human service organization offers a comprehensive range of programs devoted to breaking the cycle of poverty. With 103 years of service and 23 locations across the city, Matrix is recognized as a pillar of hope and stability in the community. This grant represents an opportunity for Matrix to take a much needed next step in our evolution, collaboration with an established research institution to integrate scientific analysis of our delivery system.

I came to Matrix 4 years ago, leaving a 23 year career as a managed health care executive. My decision to leave healthcare and lead a human service not-for-profit in Detroit was purposeful. In Detroit I witnessed levels of poverty and systemic dysfunction far more extensive than anywhere else in the country. The statistics offer proof: 25% graduation rate; highest unemployment in the country: 50% of our children living at or under the poverty level.

In my new role as a CEO of a human service organization, I was struck by the lack of clinical pathways and meaningful outcomes measurement essential to understanding and addressing generational poverty. Deeply troubling was the lack of collaboration and integration among providers and universities.

I prioritized these concerns and as a result Matrix has evolved as a leader in collaborative programming in our community. The Center, an abandoned eye sore 4 years ago, located in one of the poorest urban neighborhoods in the country, is today a thriving community center with 88 programs under one roof. The Center boasts over 2000 client visits a week and offers a scope of programs that include Head Start, literacy, computer certifications, associates degree, programs in the arts, music, social enterprise and even a barber shop.

Collaboration is also evidenced across the scope of our programs. Matrix has implemented our "Transition To Success" model (TTS). TTS, developed from my experience managing patients with chronic illness is designed to transition individuals and families from dependency to self sufficiency through a structured, comprehensive, integrated system of care that engages an existing, already funded human service delivery system. The response from both clients and funders has been overwhelming.

Our stories of success abound, as does the national (CBS Evening News, NY Times) and local (TV, Radio, Metro Times) media attention. However much needed scientifically-driven analysis, essential to understanding care remains elusive.

To that end, Matrix views our work with Wayne State University (WSU) as an essential next step in our mission to improve service provision. We have worked with WSU faculty and staff to analyze our current programs and begin to set a research agenda for each unit. This IP-RISP grant is a major and critically important effort to build our research capacity essential for effective organizational capacity and sustainability. This grant speaks to the intersection of research and practice, and does so with a level of collaboration that most aspire to. We embrace the need to develop and test interventions because they hold the potential to help others with mental health problems. With our partners at WSU we are committed to this application and future investments in mental health research. This IP-RISP will also advance several areas of desired program development including:

- 1) Empowering our case managers, advocates and coaches to engage in a facilitated research process that will help them plan, test and implement services research interventions.
- 2) Providing a model and training for a new treatment approach for homeless youth.
- 3) Improving the range of services offered to women being supported in Matrix programs that speak to the African American culture.
- 4) Enhancing organizational technology systems to increase our data collection and outcome monitoring capacity.

Matrix is committed to a long-term, ongoing relationship between our community-based agency and WSU, a well-respected research partner in Detroit. Matrix understands this process and is committed to fully participate in research, including idea generation, implementation, human subjects' consents from staff and clients, monitoring and evaluation of our efforts. Our Board of Directors, also in full support, ensures that this partnership and its goals remain a priority for Matrix.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcella Wilson, Ph.D.

President & CEO

Matrix Human Services

www.matrixhs.org