

[DAILY STAR PROPOSAL]

Hi Clint,

The following is a more detailed pitch on what we're hoping to achieve with our project, and below that are some details on our projected budget. Thank you so much for your consideration!

Arizona removes children from their homes at the third highest rate in the nation, most often based on allegations of neglect. Additionally, one in four children here are living in poverty. The correlation between poverty and neglect is easy to see, especially when coupled with a lack of access to affordable child care. Data from the Arizona Department of Economic Security and the state's Department of Child Safety show that as access to child care for low-income families dropped from 16,191 families in 2009 to an all-time low of 3,724 in 2014, the cases of neglect grew from 9,845 in 2009 to just under 20,000 during 2015.

The state has been working on reducing the number of children being removed from their homes, but it's a challenging process. The problems are complex and include families that have deeply ingrained cycles of dysfunction and trauma to overcome. For many, learning new ways of living and parenting is not going to happen quickly. The state needs funding, skilled workers and solid practices to achieve these goals but the focus is often still on preventing potential tragedies instead of addressing problems before they get out of control. One example: Federal funding from TANF, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, is intended to help families gain employment skills while also helping them find and – at least initially - afford child care. During 2015, none of the funding from Arizona's TANF block grants was used on child care while millions went to cover costs for foster care and adoptions. If the goal is to help families so children can stay with their parents, Arizona is failing miserably. During 2009, 7,700 children were removed from their homes while during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the number had increased to just under 12,000.

Our project will focus on how Arizona can do a better job of helping families and protecting its children without unnecessarily removing children from their homes. We will visit several other states that have found ways to help move people out of these cycles and into healthier lifestyles, and also look at how Arizona might better use its resources and funding on these families and their children. Topics to be explored will include caseworker training and retention, programs that help families stay intact while getting help and keeping children safe, and how to change what is often an adversarial relationship between child welfare workers and the parents it serves.

Our editor Jill Jordan Spitz is estimating it might cost us about \$26,000 to do everything we're planning. This includes:

- \$10,000 for up to five reporting trips to states where specific child welfare reforms have proven successful and could be a model for Arizona (each trip to include one reporter and one photographer);
- \$6,000 for a trip to a reporting conference related to the subject matter for myself and my colleague Patty Machelor;

- \$10,000 for three community forums we plan to hold after our project is published, to engage the general public and stakeholders in the effort to find and implement solutions.

Our editor also noted we are happy to share receipts for our expenses. We aren't trying to cover anything other than what the Star is actually spending on this project that is outside the norm — meaning, we aren't seeking funding to cover our salaries during this time or anything like that.

Thanks Clint – happy to talk to you or anyone else about this if you all have any questions!

Best,

Emily