

FOR EXAMPLE PURPOSES ONLY! – SAMPLE LETTER OF INQUIRY

February 17, 2002

ABC Funder
1234 NW Main Street
Portland, OR 97201

Dear _____:

We are so pleased to hear of your commitment to fund, as well as support with volunteer efforts, programs that improve the lives, health, and education of our region's children! The Children's Foundation of Oregon (CF), founded in 1992, is a small charitable organization funded through grants, donations, and individual giving. Our mission is to support programs, projects and partnerships that promote healthy children. In 1994 we established the Campaign for Healthy Children — our strategic programmatic direction — for much the same reasons ABC Portland's intent is to focus philanthropy upon children and education. We knew, for example, that in 1994, Oregon ranked 49th, second from the *bottom* in immunization rates, for children aged two and under. This was an access-to-health-care problem that we could tackle! To address this gap in health care delivery, we developed the Free Immunizations for Children Community Clinics, our flagship program.

We offer an immunization clinic once each month that is volunteer-led and operated. Registered nurse volunteers assess immunization needs, decide upon appropriate vaccination schedules and administer injections. Over one hundred specially trained nurses volunteer regularly. Their volunteer time is valued at an estimated \$40,000 annually! In addition to nurse volunteers, community volunteers and high school students serve as receptionists, language translators, and help ease the “immunization anxiety” and needle-fear of the young patients with games, toys, crafts and treats. The County Health Department and Portland Lutheran Church donate space. The County Health Department donates vaccines and medical supplies. More information about the clinics can be found on our web site www.childrens-foundation-of-oregon.org.

All services are offered at no charge. Through these creative public/private partnerships, **the clinics have provided more than 21,000 free childhood immunizations to at-risk populations** — virtually all are low-income, the vast majority has no health insurance and only limited access to medical care. Many are recent immigrants. Many speak limited English. Most are largely underserved by our nation's traditional health care delivery systems. Most do *not* qualify for the Oregon Health Plan.

Immunizations for children prevent diseases and are a vital component of basic primary care. There are 20 immunizations required for children from birth to age 2 and five more needed from ages 2 to 5. Children must also be current with their required immunizations or they will be sent home and excluded from school or pre-school until they are adequately protected. It is through these stringent public health requirements that the United States has been able to largely eliminate the deadly and damaging epidemics of 11 communicable diseases, such as polio, meningitis, measles and mumps. By offering these clinics, we contribute to the education of our community's children by ensuring that they remain eligible for school attendance.

Consumer research consistently reports that nurses are the health care providers most trusted to provide high-quality care and accurate health information. Early on we discovered that the Free Immunization Clinics afforded the opportunity to piggyback other basic health care services and information for our patients, limited only by space and the efforts needed to coordinate these ancillary activities. To capitalize

upon our eager and receptive audiences, in the past we have offered information about the WIC food program and enrolling in the Oregon Health Plan. At times the County Health Department has offered lead screening. University Dental School students have taught brushing techniques and distributed toothbrushes. As funding and volunteer resources permit, we plan to develop a child car seat program to demonstrate current recommendations for child safety. Also planned is a public awareness campaign about the importance of folic acid intake for all women of childbearing age to prevent birth defects.

Our objectives and outcomes measures are relatively straightforward. For example, increase the number of children immunized and the percent of fully immunized school-age children in the target populations. Results can be easily measured by using existing data collection measures conducted by the County Health Department. Additional objectives will be established based upon the specific health information and safety education programs selected for this program year.

The overall annual budget for the clinics is \$49,000, much of which is subsidized by CF through contributed space, staff time, and project management. This represents about ½ of our total annual operating budget. We are flexible in the amount of financial support to request from ABC Portland — around \$20,000-30,000 would be ideal. Funds would be used to fund staffing (a nurse Clinic Coordinator and project management), educational materials, and interpreters, for example. Most appealing is the fact that you are interested in a longer-term, rewarding relationship with a program in which ABC Portland can contribute actively and personally. The Immunization Clinics are just such a program! They are multi-faceted and offer ABC Portland a wide range of significant, satisfying opportunities. Marketing and promotion of the clinics is always a need and this year we plan to produce PSAs in both English and Spanish for airing on local broadcast media.

Expanding the use of information technology could streamline both the immunization process and improve the quality of the health education program offerings. The State of Oregon maintains a centralized registry of each child's immunization history. Our target population is highly mobile and records are often lost. Establishing a direct dial-up connection to the State Immunization Registry will help the volunteer nurses quickly assess the child's need for immunizations, averting unnecessary shots or missed doses. Assistance from members of ABC Portland able to help set up such an application (i.e., those with skills in TCP/IP and client/server database technology) would be invaluable!

On the "high-touch" rather than the "high-tech" side, members of ABC Portland willing to step in and read to an anxious child, play a board game, or translate for a non-English speaking parent will find their volunteer time deeply satisfying. We look forward to crafting a rewarding, long-term creative partnership with ABC Portland, which meets your needs for volunteer involvement and helps us improve and expand our health services to these most-underserved populations of children within our region.

Sincerely,

Mark Needles, RN
President

Sharon Fairly, MBA
Executive Director