New Reeve Foundation National Paralysis Resource Center Grant Program To:

Address Social Isolation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Program Rationale

Emerging research on COVID-19 shows that social isolation and loneliness due to the coronavirus pandemic have been linked to many physical and mental health problems including heart disease, diabetes, heart failure, stroke, dementia, anxiety, depression and suicide. The health damage caused by isolation and loneliness is estimated to increase the risk of early death by 26 percent, has been equated to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and is estimated to cumulatively cost Medicare an additional $6.7 billion each year\(^1\). Studies have also documented, social isolation contributes to elevated blood pressure, morning spikes in cortisol levels, and disrupted sleep\(^2\).

Research shows that adults with chronic conditions and physical or cognitive disabilities are more than two times as likely to report feeling socially isolated (37%) than adults who do not have these health issues (15%)\(^3\). Research on the psychological impact of mass trauma (e.g., natural disasters, flu outbreaks) suggests that the pandemic might particularly harm the mental health of marginalized populations who have less access to socioeconomic resources and supportive social networks\(^4\).

In addition, earlier quarantines provide some indications of the potential fallout from extended periods of isolation. After being quarantined during the epidemic of sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), individuals who were quarantined or had relatives who contracted SARS were 2 to 3 times more likely to report high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms than the rest of the population\(^5\).

Lastly, surveys and data collected from the Reeve Foundation and from stakeholders in the field of paralysis research have indicated that social isolation has had the number one negative impact on the lives of people living with disabilities relative to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grants Program

The aim of the Reeve Foundation’s new grants program is to **address social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic** with the goal of enhancing connectedness of people living with paralysis and their caregivers to their communities and preventing adverse health outcomes.

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1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data
4. Goldmann & Galea, 2014
Though we are looking to the field for innovative ways to address the program’s aim and goals, funds may support programs and projects to:

- Connect isolated individuals and remotely foster engagement and connection through
  - Virtual support groups
  - Online activities to help support self-care and stress management
  - Virtual and online adaptive physical activity and health promotion programs
  - Art sessions
  - Gaming
- Adapt services or create new services to continue to support and engage family caregivers
- Facilitate connection through the use of technology, including
  - Increasing access to internet, broadband service, and tablets (via loan closets)
- Provide programs with online opportunities for volunteering (*Volunteering has been shown to have many positive health benefits*)
- Create strategies to strengthen and/or build social networks
- Provide access to tools and resources to help people remain connected and engaged

The budget for this program is $300,000. It is expected that grants will be awarded within the range of $25,000-$50,000.

**Eligibility**

**Nonprofit organizations** with IRS 501(c)(3) status, municipal and state governments, school districts, recognized tribal entities, and other institutions such as community or veterans hospitals may apply. An organization must have its own 501(c)(3) tax status (or be a part of or chapter of a national organization that is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization). Fiscal Sponsors are not allowed to apply on behalf of non-501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

**Application Process**

Nonprofit organizations are asked to prepare a one or two page *Letter of Intent* that includes brief descriptions of:

1) The organization (you must include your organization’s EIN/Tax ID#)
2) The proposed project (indicating a proposed outreach plan to people living with paralysis or their caregivers), and
3) Amount requested.

Submit Letters of Intent to QOL@ChristopherReeve.org with the subject line “LOI: COVID-19 Grants.”

*Selected organizations will be invited to submit a full application.*

**Program Timeline**

Letters of Intent (3-week open period begins September 22nd) due October 13, 2020
Invitations to submit full applications will be made by October 30, 2020
Applications due by November 20, 2020
Awards announced by December 31, 2020
Projects begin January 1, 2021
Projects end December 31, 2021