

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**DATE: APRIL 15, 2003**

**ORGANIZATION:** La Clínica del Pueblo, Inc  
2831 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

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**PURPOSE**

To fortify La Clínica's Emergency Fund, which complements the Pharmacy Assistance Program that helps many low-income immigrants to obtain medications. La Clínica del Pueblo created the Emergency Fund, with support from the Spring Creek Foundation, to purchase medicines while clients wait for the process to complete through the Pharmacy Assistance Program which can take up to 4 weeks.

**GRANT PERIOD:** One year from date of award.

**TOTAL AGENCY BUDGET FOR 2003:** \$4,779,368 operating budget only

**FUNDING REQUEST:** \$10,904

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

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**Juan Romagoza, MD**  
**Executive Director**

## **II. NARRATIVE**

### **La Clínica's history, mission, and activities**

La Clínica del Pueblo is a non-profit 501(c)(3) agency whose mission is "To provide free, culturally appropriate health services in the immigrant community." La Clínica opened 20 years ago in order to respond to the urgent health needs of immigrants. Their status as newcomers to the area, with no understanding of how the health system worked in The United States made matters difficult for them. They could not participate in a system they did not understand and which excluded them from its services. There were few health services available; therefore, recent immigrants could not get care for their most precious and sometimes only possession, their health.

To respond to that need La Clínica began providing services one-night per week, in a one-room clinic. The demand was overwhelming. Little by little, immigrants in the area discovered that there were people who cared for them and whom they could trust - people who also came from the same culture and background as them. Clients began to understand how things worked and they became participants in the complicated US health system.

Through the years, La Clínica grew out of its clinic space. Due to the restricted ability to respond to the high demand for its services, La Clínica acquired a new building and initiated a capital campaign to remodel it. Just recently, La Clínica moved to its new building located on 2831 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. La Clínica's staff members now work with new state-of-the-art equipment and ample space to provide better and new services to their clients.

Five departments within La Clínica provide services to low-income people of all races and ethnicities who do not have insurance and cannot afford the high cost of health care. The Clinical Services department, for instance, provides general health care to clients from pediatric to geriatric. The Mental Health department provides counseling and referral for domestic violence victims, children with behavioral problems, and counseling for people suffering from stress due to recent terrorist threats and announcements of war, a trauma that many immigrants experienced in their countries of origin.

La Clínica also houses an HIV department that provides prevention services and support to people affected by the virus. The support is given in the form of counseling and testing, medicines, mental health counseling, referrals, and housing assistance. Another department at La Clínica is the Interpreter Services department that helps people who do not speak English fluently enough to communicate with doctors and other providers. The last department, but one of the most important ones, is the Social Services department. This department plays a critical role in helping to break down the barriers to health care faced by low-income, underinsured immigrants. Social Services is in charge of evaluating the real needs of La Clínica's clients and its Director, a licensed MSW, provides clients with counseling; assists clients in securing housing, food, clothing, medicine and medical equipment; and provides clinical supervision for the HIV case managers. Social Services staff educates and enrolls eligible clients into Medicaid, Medicare and other programs. The staff also helps patients obtain medications by assisting them in applying to pharmaceutical companies' prescription assistance programs.

In addition to the five main departments above described, La Clínica relies on the office of Education and Outreach to go beyond La Clínica's premises to reach, inform, and educate the immigrant community about health issues. Through a program known as Healthy Sundays, La Clínica also provides health services at local churches where the immigrant population gathers.

## **Project Request**

### Project Need

Hundreds of La Clínica's patients are constantly forced to make a choice between paying their rent and purchasing a month's worth of medication for their illness. Most of La Clínica's patients are not eligible for locally or federally funded medical programs such as Medicaid; therefore, they have no access to affordable medicine. Immigrants who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area are largely left out of the government-sponsored safety net for indigent residents and are left to accept provisional healthcare arrangements without full coverage of their medical needs. The majority of La Clínica's patients work in hourly wage jobs with no benefits. Their already tight budgets must stretch to cover their basic needs plus whatever medications they need to recover their health and return to work. The longer they spend without medicine, the longer they often spend out of work.

La Clínica provides patients with free, comprehensive health care but cannot afford to maintain a complete pharmacy. Most patients are given prescriptions for which, without insurance, they must pay full price in private pharmacies. These prescriptions are often extremely expensive and are impossible for patients to fill on their own, given their tight incomes. One month's worth of Glucophage 1000 mg costs \$80.00, Pravachol 40 mg \$107.80, and Prevacid 30 mg \$167.85. A diabetic patient could pay more than \$230 for her monthly medication needs, including the daily test strips, which cost around \$1 per day. There is currently an insurance program in the District of Columbia called Alliance that helps low-income residents, but sometimes patients from La Clínica do not qualify because lack of documentation or because they do not live in the District.

At La Clínica, Raúl Hernández, Program Assistant, helps patients in applying to the patient assistance programs of pharmaceutical companies. This process is fairly labor-intensive: patients must fill out an application with Mr. Hernández and bring in various documents that prove where they live, their income, and their health status. Once all of these documents are collected, Mr. Hernández sends the information plus the prescription to the pharmaceutical company for processing. Usually, after waiting about a month without medication, the patient is sent three month's worth of medicine or a voucher to purchase it. When the three months expire and the patient must get a refill, Mr. Hernández and the patient must start the process again. For uninsured patients with chronic illnesses, this is a difficult process that must happen at least four times each year for each medication and often involves lapses in coverage. Currently, Mr. Hernández is completing about 50 applications every week.

Some patients often have difficulties providing all of the documentation required by the pharmaceutical companies; many are paid in cash instead of checks and cannot easily document their income, or they rent an apartment from someone who does not provide a lease or want to get involved for fear of legal problems. Other patients, unfamiliar with this country's healthcare, often do not notify La Clínica of their medication needs until they have completely run out. This means that the patients may have a lapse for a month or more of necessary medication while they apply again for the pharmaceutical assistance program.

Patients who are unable to work because of illness or injury often have more difficulties than just purchasing their medication: covering their basic needs such as food and transportation is equally challenging. The traditional safety net sponsored by local and federal programs again excludes the majority of La Clínica's patients who are not citizens or permanent residents. These patients rely on an informal safety net of family and friends; but in true emergency situations, they come to La Clínica in search of assistance. Strengthening and expanding the fund

established for these emergencies would allow La Clínica to continue filling a great void in this area and support some of its neediest patients.

### Target Population

La Clínica provides comprehensive care to men, women, children and adolescents. The target population for this request is uninsured patients who cannot afford to purchase one month of medication while they wait for assistance from pharmaceutical companies and patients who need emergency food or transportation assistance to meet their basic needs. This population will draw from members of La Clínica's existing patient base.

### Process

Social Services Director Luis Morales will supervise the development of the program and will administer the emergency funds provided by the Spring Creek Foundation. Mr. Morales will meet with patients in need of emergency assistance and assess their eligibility for and access to any other established service programs such as Food Stamps or local food banks, Medicaid, or other programs. After Mr. Morales assesses that a patient has no other routes for assistance, he will authorize the use of vouchers, tokens, or pharmacy assistance from this emergency fund.

Medication assistance will be provided by Raúl Hernández contacting one of the local pharmacies, faxing the prescription, and authorizing it to be billed to an account established with the funds from the Spring Creek Foundation. Mr. Morales and La Clínica's administrative office will monitor the account balance to ensure that funds will support any prescription faxed.

Mr. Morales will distribute food and transportation assistance to patients who are not eligible for government assistance only after referring them to local food banks and soup kitchens and assessing their ability to pay for their own transportation. Mr. Morales will purchase small (\$20) food vouchers from local grocery stores and tokens and metro passes to distribute to patients.

### **Organizational Capacity**

#### Organizational Budget

La Clínica's FY 2003 core operating budget projects revenues of \$4,517,665 and expenses of \$4,779,368. La Clínica supports a staff of 48 to administer the programs described above. La Clínica also relies on approximately 100 volunteers each year to help serve immigrants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. La Clínica's current fringe benefits rate is set at 19% and has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate of 23.7% of salaries and wages including all fringe benefits (Cognizant agency, DHHS Division of Cost Allocation).

Please refer to attachment A for FY2003 core budget details.

#### Emergency Fund Budget Justification

La Clínica del Pueblo respectfully requests \$10,904 for an emergency fund for clients. Funds used to purchase one month of medications for patients while they await assistance from pharmaceutical companies are estimated at \$5,000. Funds used to purchase 4 \$20 food vouchers each month for patients in need of emergency food are estimated at \$960 (4 x \$20 = \$100 x 12 months = \$960). Funds used to purchase one bag of bus tokens / month (\$22) and an equal number of metro passes for patients with no money to get to medical appointments or food banks are estimated at \$528 (\$22 x 12 months = \$264 in bus tokens + \$264 in metro passes = \$528).

The remaining \$3,570 from the grant requested will be used to pay 19.5% of Mr. Hernández annual salary of \$15,660. Luis Morales, Social Services Director, will donate 5% of his time each week to the management of this fund in kind (5% of FTE @ annual salary of \$42,188 = \$2,109).

Please refer to attachment B for the complete budget.

### **Attachments**

- A. Organizational Budget**
- B. Budget request for the Spring Creek Foundation**
- C. List of Foundation Grants received for 2002**
- D. IRS non-profit status letter**
- E. List of Board of Directors**