Proposal for Fellowship Placement • Summer 2018

- Organization: IRIS- Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services

- Full street address of organization: 235 Nicoll St., second floor, New Haven, CT 06511

- Website: www.irisct.org

- Name and title of person who will be the Fellow’s direct supervisor (the supervisor must be available to supervise Fellow on a daily basis): Tanya Genn, Manager of Youth Services

- Phone number and e-mail address of proposed direct supervisor: 203-562-2095; education@irisct.org

- Placement dates (8-11 weeks between Tuesday, May 29 and Friday, August 10, 2018): Tuesday, May 30-Friday, August 4, 2017 (though having a week or two of vacation during that time and finishing on Friday, August 11 is also fine).

- Are placement dates flexible? If so, please describe:

Yes – Fellow may begin or end placement later or earlier according to needs of their schedule.

- Proposed work schedule (placements should be equivalent to full-time and not more than 37.5 hours/week): 37.5 hours/week, generally during business hours, M-F

Placement Description

- Organization description (mission statement, population served. 150 words or less.): IRIS – Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, helps refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, strengthen hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut’s communities. Refugees, a subset of the larger immigrant population, are men, women, and children who have fled their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees who successfully complete a rigorous
screening process – conducted by the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security – are granted legal “refugee status” and invited to resettle in the U.S. The overall goal of the federal refugee resettlement program – and therefore of IRIS – is for refugees to adapt to U.S. culture, become self-sufficient, and integrate into the communities in which they live. IRIS has helped over 300 refugees resettle to Connecticut so far this year. The refugees who come to Connecticut through IRIS are from Afghanistan, Congo (DRC), Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and several other countries. The IRIS office, from which our services are offered or coordinated, is located in the East Rock neighborhood of New Haven, near the corner of Willow and Nicoll Streets.

- Please write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting (50 words or less. This will be used as your agency’s project description summary on the PPSF website, so please be succinct):

  The Fellow would help school-aged refugee children access summer programs and conduct research about the challenges refugee families face as they navigate the public school system.

- Please write a complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow. (Suggested length: one to two pages.)

  Refugee children – economically disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities who speak little, if any, English – are at extremely high risk for poor educational outcomes. To succeed in school, they need coordinated, wraparound, intensive services, but they enter an education system that is often poorly equipped to serve them.

  Through a multi-faceted approach of in-school tutoring and summer and enrichment programming, IRIS Education and Youth Services works intensively with refugees to improve their academic performance and social adjustment to schools. The main objectives of programming are to improve the level of English-language proficiency, boost academic performance, ensure school attendance, improve cultural adjustment, foster school participation and leadership, and to help parents of refugee students become involved in all aspects of their children’s education.

  In Summer 2018, the Fellow will serve in the IRIS Education and Youth Services Department. The primary duty of the fellow will be to help refugee youth and families access summer enrichment programs in the New Haven area. This will include partnering with other youth service agencies to explore and negotiate possibilities for collaboration. Programming will make families aware of the rich array of family-orientated resources in the greater New Haven area. Helping families access these
programs will involve working with interpreters to communicate these opportunities and helping parents navigate the process of enrolling their kids. The Fellow may also help organize field trips and acculturation opportunities within the community for children.

The Fellow will draw upon this direct-service work with refugee families to inform a secondary aspect of their fellowship: to conduct research about the challenges of educating refugee students and best practices to address these challenges. There will be two parts to the research component of the fellowship: First, the Fellow will revise and update a report called “Educating Refugee Students” that was written by a past YPPS Fellow. The original paper is an excellent resource, and IRIS has shared it widely, but it is outdated because it was written over five years ago. The 2018 Fellow would update the statistics cited in the report, and revise it in light of changes in the populations of refugees that IRIS serves. The revision would involve conducting interviews with IRIS refugee clients and educators in New Haven public schools. The second part of the research component of the Summer 2018 Fellowship will be to research “Newcomer” Programs for refugee and immigrant students around the country, with the goal of presenting various models and best practices.

Ultimate outcomes for the Fellow’s direct-service work in this program will be that refugee youth (ages 5-17) who want to participate in summer enrichment programs are registered for and begin summer programs. Outcomes for the research component of the fellowship will be two-fold: 1) The Fellow updates and revises the “Educating Refugee Youth” Report. 2) The fellow will produce a report on models of Newcomer Programs in American schools and best practices for preparing refugee and immigrant youth for mainstream classrooms.

- Specific skills/experience required for the project (please list):

  - Excellent organizational skills.
  - Excellent intercultural communication skills
  - Willingness to take initiative in meeting and developing rapport with refugees.
  - Ability to work independently (after extensive training) and manage time effectively.
  - Ability to practice creative problem solving.
  - Experience working with people from non-Western cultures
  - Interest in or knowledge of youth education
  - Proficiency in a language spoken by refugee clients (Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Tigrinya, Kiswahili, etc) is a plus, but not a requirement
  - A willingness to “help where help is needed.”
• Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours). If a car is required, please include information regarding parking arrangements and mileage reimbursement): Having a driver’s license and a car – and the willingness to drive clients to educational events when bus transportation isn’t feasible – is greatly preferred, though not an absolute requirement. On street parking and mileage reimbursement are available. If fellow does not own a car, must be willing to learn and navigate the public bus system with refugees.

• Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your agency in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, please describe any work that Yale students have done with your agency.

IRIS has hosted Presidential Public Service Fellows for the past eight summers, in capacities similar to the those described here, with the Youth Services Department. Prior Fellows also assisted IRIS’s Director of Acculturation programs in the implementation of a monthly orientation program for newly arrived refugees.