Request for Proposals for an Evaluation of Sesame Workshop’s Parental Addiction Resources
(April, 2020)

Background

In the United States, 5.7 million children under age 11 (one in eight children) live in households with a parent who has a substance abuse disorder. These children are vulnerable to direct (e.g., abuse, neglect, opioid ingestion) and indirect (e.g., limited household resources) risks. They are more likely to have academic, cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional challenges (e.g., behavior disorders, depression, anxiety, social isolation), and to develop a substance abuse disorder later in life. Parental addiction also disrupts the family’s ability to provide a safe, stable home environment.

To help adult caregivers support young children impacted by their parents’ addiction, Sesame Workshop launched a new topic area within its Sesame Street in Communities initiative (https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/parental-addiction/). The “Parental Addiction” topic area is centered around Karli, a 6 ½-year-old Sesame Street Muppet whose mom is dealing with addiction. Created in consultation with experts in addiction and early childhood development, these engaging, bilingual (English/Spanish) resources model strategies to help children overcome the trauma of parental addiction and build resilience. They focus on five age-appropriate messages:

- **Shame and Isolation**: Parental addiction brings stigma, shame, fear, and loneliness, but many other children are also going through this—no child is alone.
- **Role of Caring Adults**: Caring adults can help children talk about their feelings, explain the situation, and build a sense of hope.
- **Explaining Addiction**: Addiction is a sickness, and people need treatment to get better.
- **The 7 C’s**: You did not cause the problem, you cannot cure or control it, but you can care for yourself by communicating your big feelings, making healthy choices, and celebrating yourself.
- **Resilience, Hope, and Optimism**: Children and their families have the inner strength to heal from their experiences and grow stronger/more resilient.

Adult caregivers can use a diverse array of Sesame Street tools to convey these messages and help children cope, including a storybook; videos for adults and children; an interactive digital activity for children; articles for adults; downloadable/printable pages with activities for adults and children to do together.

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The Evaluation
Research is at the core of Sesame Workshop’s model for creating engaging and effective content for young children and families. We expect this evaluation to use primarily a quantitative approach, and a quasi-experimental design (pre/post) that compares participants’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after exposure to the Parental Addiction resources. We encourage use of qualitative methods to augment the findings (e.g., focus groups, individual interviews, or other qualitative data collection methods). We propose quantitative data will be collected through repeated, pre-test (before exposure to the resources) and post-test (after exposure to the resources) web-based surveys administered online. After collection of the post-exposure online survey responses, qualitative data will be collected via focus group discussions with a subset of the survey respondents. This will provide additional detail and supplement the quantitative data.

The evaluation will focus on Sesame Workshop’s Parental Addiction web-based and hands-on (storybook) resources, and should aim to assess:

a) Adult caregivers’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding age appropriate interactions with the young child(ren) in their care, specifically in regard to helping children understand and cope with parental addiction
b) Adult caregivers’ awareness of the importance of their role in their children’s healthy development in general, and ability to cope with parental addiction in particular.
c) Children’s knowledge and behaviors regarding their parents’ addiction, as reported by adult caregivers
d) Appeal, relevance and usefulness of the Sesame Workshop brand and resources for adults to support their young child’s ability to cope, and for the children they care for (as reported by adult caregivers).

Timing
The evaluation will run from approximately June 15, 2020 to January 15, 2021.

Sampling
The target sample will include adults acting as primary caregivers of young children (ages 3 to 8) who have a parent experiencing or recovering from substance abuse, including alcohol and opioids, with an oversampling of primary caregivers of children impacted by parental opioid addiction. The sample will not include children; the adult caregivers will be asked to report on children’s knowledge and behavior. The evaluation may be conducted in one or more locations in the continental United States, excluding Maryland, southeast Florida, and Maricopa County, AZ. Locations will be determined by evaluator in consultation with Sesame Workshop. The sampling procedure must consider demographic variables such as child’s current primary caregiver, parent’s general addiction history (currently in recovery, treatment, etc.), socio-economic status, and child age and gender. The analyses will examine the project’s educational impact by SES, child age and gender, and other variables, to be recommended by the proposer, that may be important to the community context. A power analysis should accompany the description of sampling methodology.
Outcomes and Measures
The measures used in the evaluation must reflect the project’s educational goals and be age-appropriate. Researchers must pilot test the measures before fieldwork to ensure their validity and to make certain that other common measurement issues (such as a ceiling effect) are addressed. The evaluation will measure developmentally appropriate outcomes in children, as reported by adults, as well as outcomes on adults themselves as articulated in the project’s curriculum.

The main outcomes of interest for the evaluation are:

- Changes in caregivers’ knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy with regard to helping young children understand and cope with parental addiction.
- Changes in caregivers’ knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy with regard to communication with others about parental addiction.
- Changes in caregivers’ attitudes and awareness regarding the importance of their role in their children’s healthy development and ability to cope with parental addiction.
- Changes in quality and frequency of healthy and nurturing adult-child interactions.
- Changes in attitudes and feelings about stigma regarding parental addiction for children (as reported by adult caregivers) and for adult caregivers.
- Changes in frequency and number of resources used to help children cope with parental addiction.

The researcher will be responsible for identifying validated measures and adapting them for this evaluation if necessary. New measures should be pilot tested and validated prior to fieldwork.

Proposal Components
Proposals shall include a provision for delivery of the following elements:

1. Research Design: Proposals shall outline the design of a potential study or set of studies including:
   - Sampling strategy, including sample size justification, and selection criteria of qualified caregivers (e.g., caring for child for at least 2 months), and how the sampling will account for any attrition that may occur.
   - Research measures, such as those that assess quality of adult-child interactions, caregiver self-efficacy, and promotion of resiliency skills (for example, the Parenting Relationship Questionnaire, the Emotion Regulation Checklist, Adult Child Relationship Scale, or Parenting Sense of Competence Scale).
   - Data collection plan, including a description of monitoring and quality control measures for data collection; a description of how researchers are trained and ways in which researchers will ensure that they adhere to the ethical standards of research set forth by the Society for Research on Child Development (http://www.srcd.org/about-us/ethical-standards-research).
   - Data analysis plan that outlines how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project’s impact.
   - Timeline.
2. **Budget:** A detailed budget for the project shall be submitted with the research proposal. The budget shall include separate sections outlining costs associated with each data collection wave.

3. **Key personnel:** CVs or biographic summaries of key personnel.

4. **Management plan:** An explanation of processes for establishing research objectives and creating a realistic, detailed action plan for meeting those objectives.

5. **Quality assurance processes:** Description of the techniques, systems and resources ensuring the care and control with which research will be conducted, including, but not limited to facilities and equipment, documentation of procedures and methods, research records, the handling of samples and materials.

6. **Recruitment resources:** Applicants must provide examples of strategies, relationships, and resources for recruiting primary caregivers of young children experiencing parental addiction.

7. **Past evaluations and references that illustrate knowledge and expertise in research on trauma and early childhood development, media and early childhood development, and/or the impact of parental addiction on children, preferably young children:**
   - A 1-2-page description of similar or comparable studies in which the agency has engaged in the past, or similar work sample
   - Contact information for at least 2 previous clients for references

### Deliverables
Researchers will deliver the following for the evaluation:

1. **Instruments:** Researchers will submit draft and final versions of instruments to Sesame Workshop for review before the evaluation begins.

2. **Baseline report:** After completing the baseline data collection, researchers will submit a report of findings in English including tables and graphs as relevant.

3. **Data analysis plan:** Before endline data collection begins, researchers will submit a detailed data analysis plan that describes how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project’s impact.

4. **Endline report:** The researcher will submit a draft version of the report of the findings to Sesame Workshop for review prior to the completion of a final report (in English). The report must include an Executive Summary.

5. **1-2 page summary:** The researcher will submit a 1-2 page summary of findings with appropriate infographics created for a non-research audience.

6. **Data, original instruments, videos, IRB approval document, consent forms, data and other material:** Researchers will be required to submit an electronic version of data (in SPSS or SPSS-compatible format), as well as original instruments. Quantitative data and qualitative data will become the property of Sesame Workshop. Note: The researchers selected will have access to instruments used in previous Sesame Workshop assessments, which can be used as a base for creating questionnaires and other data collection devices for the proposed study.

### Deadline
Proposal should be submitted by **May 1, 2020.**
Budget
The research proposal should not exceed a budget of US$ 230,000 with a final report due on January 15, 2021.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Experience in conducting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative research and knowledge of media research methodologies
- Experience conducting educational research with families with young children
- Experience conducting research in low-resource contexts
- Experience conducting research in the area of parental addiction
- The ability to recruit desired sample (e.g., primary caregivers of young children experiencing parental addiction)
- A demonstrated capacity to work in a range of settings and to deliver products in a timely fashion under tight and strict monitoring, management and deadlines
- The ability to produce high-quality reports for both researcher and non-researcher audiences
- The ability to conduct high-level analyses such as multivariate analyses and multi-level modeling
- Feasibility of study within budget and time parameters
- Appropriateness of research design
- Capacity to execute proposed study

How to Submit Proposals
Submit proposal via email to: david.cohen@sesame.org. Please note the following in the email subject heading: Proposal for Sesame Street Parental Addiction Resources Evaluation. Upon submission of a proposal, bidders will be asked to submit a Contractor Information Form.