

July 5, 2011

**Petition to authorize continuation of statutorily mandated services for families with children with hearing loss.**

**Request:** Lifetrack Resources is petitioning the Special Master to find the continuation of statutorily mandated services for families with children with hearing loss as required by MN Statute 144.966 Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program is a critical service and authorize continuation of services and funding

**Rationale:** MN Statute 144.966 2010 subdivision 3a Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program directed the Commissioner of the Department of Health to contract with a nonprofit organization to provide support and assistance to families with children who are deaf or have a hearing loss. Focused on the health, safety and welfare of the child, the family support provided must include direct parent-to-parent assistance and information on communication, educational and medical options.

Unless appropriate action is taken quickly, children born with hearing loss will miss a critical neurological window of opportunity that can not be accessed at a later time. The Minnesota Department of Health, charged with the implementation of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and the Early Hearing Detection system, has contracted with Lifetrack Resources as the family support component of a comprehensive public health surveillance system for families throughout the state of MN for 10 years. The program serves approximately 1000 families and professionals each year. The services are funded through fee dollars paid by hospitals (\$5.00 per every newborn blood spot) for mandatory reporting on a blood spot form. It has already been determined by the Minnesota Department of Health that the testing and the fee collection will continue and similarly services supported by the fee should be maintained.

Minnesota Hands & Voices provides an essential role at a critical time for highly at risk families across the state. This service has a secure revenue source created by the legislature and should continue operation in spite of a state government shutdown. MN Hands & Voices relies upon the MN Department of Health's MN Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Follow-Up Unit for Early Intervention and Detection Program for referrals of families with children who have been confirmed to have permanent hearing loss. Since its adoption, neither the Department nor legislature has proposed any amends to the dedicated revenue stream for this program.

**Program Background:** Many parents unfamiliar with deaf/hard of hearing issues may be in shock about their child's hearing loss, and may feel isolated, especially in greater Minnesota, where peers with hearing loss, resources and adult role models are scarce. Parents may lack basic health care; follow up services, access to information about early intervention or their own advocacy skills to take the next step for their child. Parents of children with hearing loss are trained to contact each family with a newly identified child to educate families about unbiased information about the full range of communication, educational and amplification opportunities available to parents. Infants diagnosed with a hearing loss, the child is facing a neurological and developmental emergency (Source: Betterhearing.org)

Minnesota Hands & Voices was started at Lifetrack Resources in 2000 through funding from the Greater Twin Cities United Way. "Guide by Your Side" for families with children

who are deaf or hard of hearing originally started as a program in the Metro area. With corporate seed money, the program was expanded in 2006 to have Parent Guides in every region of the state. In 2007, legislation was passed to require the screening of all Minnesota newborns for hearing loss and the reporting to Minnesota Department of Health.

Prior to universal newborn screening mandated by the State of Minnesota in 2007, hearing loss was generally not identified until age three or four and even with services, children could rarely catch up to their peers in communication and language skills. Today, research has shown that if intervention starts prior to six months of age, language skills can be commensurate with hearing peers. This means, however, parents need to make decisions soon after diagnosis about amplification, communication and educational placement options.

The cost savings of identifying and intervening with even one child covers the full cost of the Guide by Your Side for one year. Lifetrack Resources partners with community stakeholders throughout the state, including state agencies, and is the Minnesota Chapter of the national/international Hands & Voices organization for families.

Respectfully Submitted,

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**Testimony to the Special Master petitioning for declaration of services for families with children with hearing loss as critical service and further, declaration of services for federally designated refugees and legal immigrants as critical services.**

**July 5, 2011**

My name is TrixieAnn Golberg, I serve as President and CEO of Lifetrack Resources, a nonprofit human services agency founded in 1948 and serving over 9,000 Minnesotan's annually through services for individuals and children with disabilities and other vulnerable populations including refugees and legal immigrants.

Lifetrack Resources is petitioning the Special Master to find the continuation of statutorily mandated services for families with children with hearing loss as required in MN Statute 144.966 subdivision 3a Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program is a critical service and authorize continuation.

Further Lifetrack Resources is petitioning the Special Master to find the continuation of services for Refugee and Legal Immigrant Services as a critical service for a vulnerable population and authorize continuation of services and funding as established in the Office of Refugee Resettlement AGPS Grant #443893, A3000012814 administered through the Office of Minnesota Department of Human Services and the State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grant agreement number FY1011LTRMAS.

**On the matter of continuation of services for families with children with hearing loss:**

MN Statute 144.966 subdivision 3a. directs the Commissioner of Department of Health to contract with a nonprofit organization to provide support and assistance to families with children who are deaf or have hearing loss. Focused on the health, safety and welfare of the child, predominately newborns, the family support provided must include direct parent-to-parent assistance and information on communication, educational and medical options beginning at birth when a state mandated new born screening test is administered by the provider hospital.

The services are funded through fees dollars paid by hospitals, \$5.00 per newborn, for mandatory reporting on a blood spot form. It has been determined by the MN Department of Health that the testing and associated fees will continue during the shut down in compliance with the 2007 statute mandating new born hearing screening.

Unless appropriate action is taken quickly, children born with hearing loss will miss a critical neurological window of opportunity that can not be accessed at a later time. The Minnesota Department of Health, charged with the implementation of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and the Early Hearing Detection system, has contracted with Lifetrack Resources as the family support component of the comprehensive public health surveillance system for families throughout the state of MN for 10 years.

This service revenue is supported by a fee created by the statute and should continue operation in spite of a state government shutdown. MN Hands & Voices relies upon the MN Department of Health's MN Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Follow-Up Unit for Early Intervention and Detection Program for referrals of families with children who have been confirmed to have permanent hearing loss. Lifetrack Resources' provides an essential role at a critical time for highly at risk children across the state. The Statute provides for each parent to be contacted by a specially trained parent guide at the time they are informed of their infant's diagnosis.

Infants diagnosed with a hearing loss are facing a neurological and developmental emergency. Many parents unfamiliar with deaf/hard of hearing issues are in shock and overwhelmed by this initial diagnosis and feel isolated, especially in greater Minnesota, where resources are scarce.

**On the matter of continuation of services for federally designated refugees and legal immigrants:**

Due to the threat of severe and permanent negative financial impact on federally designated refugees and legal immigrants, Lifetrack Resources is requesting continuation of services and funding of employment and support services authorized within in the Office of Refugee Resettlement AGPS Grant #443893, A3000012814 through the Refugee Act of 1980 (Public law 92-212,97-363,99605) administered through the Office of Minnesota Department of Human Services and the State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grant agreement number FY1011LTRMAS.

Lifetrack Resources has the unique designation for providing services to refugees and legal immigrants through both federal and state authorizations and funding. The request for authorization for continuation is in accordance with Category 2.2 of the Critical Services listed in Exhibit A of Judge Gearin's June 29<sup>th</sup> Order pertaining to "Activities having a severe and permanent negative financial impact to business or vulnerable populations or groups of individuals within Minnesota." Without continued funding a significant number of refugee and legal immigrants, who are now employed often for the first time, will lose their jobs and financial security and at great risk of losing what is already a very weak foot hold on employment and self sufficiency in this weak economic time. Most of the population served need assistance because of lack of English language skills, cultural barriers, little or no formal education, or lack of knowledge and understanding of the U.S. workplace.

If Refugee and Legal Immigrant Services at Lifetrack Resources are unable to provide important employment support services to clients during the MN state shutdown, the impact will include many limited English speaking persons being unable to receive job retention services and language translation assistance needed to maintain their private sector employment. Once laid off this population, as statistics have shown, must begin the arduous task of becoming re-employed with an even greater barrier.

Lifetrack Resources has had a unique federal and state role in providing employment and support services to Refugee and Legal Immigrants since 1997 and continuing to meet our federal ORR performance requirements during the state shut down is paramount.

As the Special Master considers these petitions, we request that should these two functions not be deemed critical services at this time that the Special Master rule that fee revenue and/or federal funds owed for work and services performed consistent with MN

State statute 144.966 Subdivision 3a and the Office of Refugee Resettlement AGPS Grant #443893 continue to be disbursed.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of vulnerable children and families who are often invisible within our community.

Presented: July 5, 2011 TrixieAnn Golberg, President/CEO, Lifetrack Resources  
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July 5, 2011

**Petition to find the continuation of services for Refugee and Legal Immigrant Services as a critical service and authorize continuation of services and funding as established in the Office of Refugee Resettlement AGPS Grant #443893, A3000012814/ State of Minnesota Department of Human Services and State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grant agreement number FY1011LTRMAS.**

**Request:** Due to the threat of severe and permanent negative financial impact on federally designated refugees and legal immigrants, Lifetrack Resources is requesting continuation of services and funding of employment support services authorized within

- Office of Refugee Resettlement AGPS Grant #443893, A3000012814/ State of Minnesota Department of Human Services Grant agreement
- State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grant agreement number FY1011LTRMAS

**Rationale:** Lifetrack Resources has the unique roll of providing services to refugees and legal immigrants through both federal and state authorizations and funding. The request for authorization for continuation is in accordance with the Ramsey County Court's order pertaining to "Activities having a severe and permanent negative financial impact to business or vulnerable populations or groups of individuals within Minnesota." Without continued funding a significant number of refugee and legal immigrants, who are now employed, will lose their jobs and financial security.

Lifetrack Resources serves 400 refugees and legal immigrants annually. Many of these individuals need assistance because of lack of English language skills, cultural barriers, little or no formal education, or lack of confidence in the workplace.

If Refugee and Legal Immigrant Services at Lifetrack Resources are unable to provide services to clients during the MN state shutdown, the impact will include many limited English speaking persons being unable to receive job retention services and language translation assistance needed to maintain employment.

Lifetrack Resources has a unique two federal and state role in providing employment services to Refugee and Legal Immigrants:

- Since 1997, Lifetrack Resources has been allocated direct funding from the Minnesota State Legislature. This year, the Governor proposed a small cut (about 5%) to the program in his budget. The legislature proposed a larger (16.7%) cut in the first year of the biennium for this program. In future years, the legislature would have this program compete in a grant pool for funding, but they did see fit to maintain a specific appropriation for next year so current services aren't disrupted and DEED has time to set up an RFP process. Lifetrack Resources serves as the fiscal host and works in collaboration with Vietnamese Social Services (St. Paul, MN) and Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (Rochester, MN).
- Since 2000, Lifetrack Resources has received funding to provide Refugee Employment Services through the Department of Human Services, which is pass-through funding from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. Lifetrack

Resources serves as the fiscal host and works in collaboration with Vietnamese Social Services (St. Paul, MN)

Respectfully submitted,

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