



SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Pediatric Scalp Care Specialists (PSCS), a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, is striving to improve the education and health care of inner-city students by dramatically reducing the occurrence of and the burden of treating outbreaks of head lice. PSCS will provide free head lice screening and treatment services to a pilot group of LAUSD elementary schools in under-served communities. We are seeking a donation of \$250,000 to purchase a mobile head lice treatment vehicle, which will allow us to rapidly respond to outbreaks by bringing treatment to the schools to directly serve affected students for free.

INTRODUCTION

Pediatric Scalp Care Specialists (PSCS) was established as a nonprofit organization in 2004 by the founder of Hair Fairies – a Los Angeles and New York City-based business dedicated to treating families with head lice. Since 1999, parents and school nurses frustrated by ineffective head lice remedies have relied upon Hair Fairies because of its innovative, all natural and guaranteed effective treatment. The head lice identification and removal process was developed by Maria Botham and has successfully treated over 10,000 clients. The process has received the endorsement of PSCS' medical advisory board, which includes prominent pediatricians and public health nurses.

PSCS will bring the same, pediatrician-recommended head lice screening and treatment technique to children on location such as at their school, summer camp, or after-school program through mobile service vehicles. This eliminates the need for children to be unexpectedly sent home from school, easing the burden on parents who would otherwise have to leave their jobs to provide supervision, saving the school lost reimbursement due to a student's absence, and ensure children are treated safely and effectively.

Current pharmaceutical treatments are expensive for the parents, toxic for the children, and they have failed to effectively contain this widespread problem. Research has shown that no head lice medication is completely effective. According to a toxicology report by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 50 – 90% of parasites survived treatment with existing head lice products. When these treatment options fail, lice and nits must be removed manually, either by school nurses who are too busy and understaffed to contain an entire outbreak, or by parents, although they often don't have the knowledge or training necessary to make their efforts effective.

Although research shows that the prevalence of head lice in households is not correlated with income, poorer families spend a proportionally higher percentage of their income on treatment, due to not having equal access to physician-directed care, and miss more time at work in order to deal with the problem. This results in a greater burden on lower-income families. PSCS' mobile services will benefit poorer families and schools afflicted by head lice.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The prevalence of head lice in public schools around the country is an ongoing problem for students, parents, and school officials. It is estimated to cost school systems over \$500 million a year in lost revenue and, moreover, result in tens of thousands of students missing important school days. Our goals are to:

- Reduce the average length of student absenteeism due to head lice from four days to one or even zero;
- Eliminate the need for parents to stay home from work to care for and treat a child diagnosed with head lice; and
- Reduce the burden on school nurses by working with them to screen and treat students



These goals will be established through our pursuit of the following services:

- Free, on-site screening and treatment for head lice
- Programs to educate parents, school nurses, pediatricians, school administrators and the general public
- Support scientific and clinical research efforts to identify effective head lice treatment and prevention methodologies, and track head lice outbreak trends
- Advocating for policy changes regarding insurance coverage, regulation of head lice treatment professionals, and banning of toxic chemicals used in head lice removal

LOS ANGELES PILOT PROJECT – STOP HEAD LICE WHERE IT COUNTS

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) – the second largest district in the country – has a substantial problem with poverty and a general lack of resources. Head lice infestations have a number of negative effects on a child in a community with so few resources that children in wealthier communities do not face. Based on LAUSD research, the school district loses up to \$4 million per year due to students being absent because of head lice. More importantly, thousands of students lose, on average 4 days of critical class time. Our efforts begin in the LAUSD because we have met with their staff several times, and have received an initial endorsement to begin providing services in the district. And Hair Fairies is already providing fee-for-service treatment options to dozens of schools in the area.

Scarce Resources in the LAUSD

- In 1999, 61% of school-age children in the district were living below the poverty line.
- In 2002, 28% of children faced “general neglect”.
- There are 115,000 households headed by single mothers.
- 72% of LAUSD students qualify for free or reduced fare lunch programs.

The Burden of Treatment in Poor Communities

- Head lice is especially prominent among elementary school students, so the expense of head lice treatment combined with the need for parents, especially single mothers, to stay home from work puts an undue financial burden on these families.
- Children already facing “general neglect” at home will be sent home from school to an unstable home life where the chances of them receiving caring and effective treatment for the infestation are not good. If they remain untreated they will lose valuable school time, and become increasingly at risk for not being able to catch up.
- Louse infestations are the number one reason for school absences and ninety-two percent of all children who are sent home from school are sent home because of head lice.
- The district stands to lose over three and a half million dollars in funding because of these absences. Based on CDC District Nurse for the LAUSD, Sue Rue’s estimate of head lice outbreaks.

Students are missing valuable school time, parents are losing needed income and the schools are losing funding for each absence. The PSCS solution of bringing free treatment to the kids would solve all of these problems.

Conclusion – The Mobile Solution

PSCS proposes to provide free screening and treatment based on the proven Hair Fairies system to a pilot group of LAUSD elementary schools. Because needy communities can neither afford effective treatment nor the burden imposed on them by attempting ineffective treatment, PSCS will begin its service by targeting schools in the LAUSD with the fewest available resources to fight an outbreak. Treatment will be accomplished via a mobile head lice treatment van and an outbreak response team available on short notice to conduct in-school screenings and treatment upon request. We will document and track screening results and cases treated, provide monthly reports to LAUSD administration and The Harvard School of Public Health. We will provide educational material and prevention training to parents throughout the LAUSD. Throughout the pilot project, we will work closely with school nurses, LAUSD

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administrators, other health service providers and advocates to refine the system for wider implementation so that more communities in need of this valuable service can have access to it in the future.