



Redlich Horwitz Foundation

Program Officer

Leadership Profile

March 2021



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation seeks an experienced program manager and strategist to serve as program officer. The Foundation, based in New York City but serving children and families throughout New York State, works to keep children, youth and families in New York's child welfare system supported and thriving. The Foundation believes children do best when they are raised by their families of origin, where they have a strong sense of love, belonging and community. The Foundation specifically prioritizes goals that advance racial equity in child welfare. The Foundation's trustees recently adopted new [Race Equity Values](#) and a more racially just approach to grant-making. All new grants and initiatives will be determined and evaluated through a racial equity lens, and the team is currently working to refresh its strategic priorities to reflect the Foundation's commitment to racial equity.

Founded in 1986 by Catherine Redlich and Robert Horwitz, the Redlich Horwitz Foundation has provided financial support and implementation assistance to improve outcomes in areas of interest to them, most recently in foster care practice and policy. While the Foundation is now best known for its efforts to ensure that every child has a safe and loving home, in its earlier years RHF supported diverse initiatives in education, criminal justice, drug policy, child welfare, and global health. In 2012, after moving to upstate New York, Cathy and Rob made the decision to narrow the Foundation's grant-making focus significantly. Their objective was two-fold: to increase the impact of the Foundation's giving, and to become more proactively involved trustees. To that end, the Foundation hired its first executive director in 2013 and began a strategic planning process to determine the direction the Foundation would take going forward. The staff and trustees met with respected thought leaders, government officials, advocates, and philanthropies to learn more about opportunities and challenges facing New Yorkers and the systems that serve them. The result was a decision to focus the Foundation's mission on improving New York's foster care system to achieve better life outcomes for children in care and for those young adults aging out of the system.

The approach always used by the Foundation is rooted in collaboration. Although grant-making is at the heart of the Foundation's work, the Foundation strives to maximize the impact of initiatives by providing technical assistance, strategic support, and access to other information, resources, and connections. The Foundation supports and works collaboratively with other stakeholders to implement thoughtful, data-informed policies and programs that:

- Promote child welfare systems that are racially just and prioritize family preservation, engagement and family-based care;
- Ensure that every child exits the foster care system into a permanent, loving family through timely reunification, adoption, kin guardianship or another lifelong adult connection; and
- Improve the overall well-being of youth and families involved with the child welfare system in New York.

These stakeholders and partners include county and state leaders, the courts, nonprofits, foundations and grassroots advocates. Together, the Foundation and its partners seek to accelerate change and improve practice and policy in support of:

- Reducing removals;
- Increasing preventive services;

- Reducing residential placements through kin-first practices;
- Improving supports for all foster families;
- Increasing community-based services for children and families; and
- Implementing other strategies proven to keep families safely together or expedite the path to permanency.

With its partners, The Foundation invests proactively in its corps belief that children should remain with their families whenever possible, and that all caregivers — birth, foster and kinship — should have access to the same types and levels of support, including financial, programmatic and therapeutic.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the conclusion of this document.



Role of the Program Officer

The program officer role is an exciting opportunity for an entrepreneurial, knowledgeable and passionate candidate to make a real difference in the lives of New York children and families. The program officer will work closely with the executive director, foundation trustees and other staff to develop and implement grant-making strategies in the state of New York (outside of New York City) to further the Foundation's key priority goals. The program officer will:

- Assist in developing the Foundation's understanding of opportunities and strategies to affect system-wide improvements for families and children in child welfare;
- Steer multiple grant-making priorities across program objectives and jurisdictions in partnership with government leaders, nonprofits, advocates and co-funding partners;
- Leverage the Foundation's national networks of consultants, information and other resources to maximize the impact of initiatives;
- Conceptualize new programs/strategies to solve problems and assist grantees with organizational or implementation challenges;
- Manage the provision of technical assistance to grantees and other partners as necessary, whether directly or through hired consultants;
- Evaluate, monitor and work with existing grantees to guide grant-making to fulfill the Foundation's objectives; and
- Track the latest trends, research, best practices, legislative and policy developments and data affecting child welfare in New York and across the country.

Creativity and critical thinking skills will be essential to success in the role. The program officer must be a problem-solver capable of thinking conceptually and strategically, as well as a collegial partner to the Foundation team and its grantees. Experience in the field of human services is key, as are excellent interpersonal skills and a passion for racial justice and child welfare system reform. Priority will be given to candidates with extensive knowledge of the New York State systems the Foundation seeks to impact and improve. Lived experience with the child welfare system and/or as an advocate for LGBTQ communities and/or communities of color will also be positive factors in candidate evaluation.

KEY TASKS

- Manage an existing portfolio of grant-making and project management that focuses on reducing congregate care placements for children in foster care and increasing the rate of and support for kinship foster care among county department of social service partners and foster care provider agencies. This work includes monitoring and problem-solving, organizing and managing technical assistance, administering grant funding, and reporting and responding to the executive director and trustees.
- Analyze the state's child welfare system, data and landscape for constraints, opportunities and champions, in conjunction with the executive director and trustees. This analysis must incorporate ideas for action beyond traditional approaches to grant-making. It is also imperative that the analysis be conducted through a lens of advancing racial equity.
- Develop plans for new programs to address racial disparities, reduce removals and expand prevention services.

- Assist in the preparation of metrics/evaluation programs for all new projects and continuously update current plans with new approaches and current best practices.
- Prepare concise and well-analyzed grant recommendations for trustee consideration that conform to the Foundation’s report templates, as directed by the executive director.
- Assist in the management of grants through their life cycle, which includes conducting due diligence, selection, implementation and evaluation and also involves providing technical support to both applicants and grantees.
- Coordinate and perform site visits and evaluate progress of grantees and projects.
- Effectively communicate information about our programs to target communities including government agencies, policymakers, other funders, impacted communities and the general public.
- Work collaboratively with the Foundation team on public communications, including newsletters, reports, white papers and all other types of information and outreach externally published by the Foundation.
- Organize and facilitate Foundation meetings and workshops.
- Initiate and maintain relationships with key stakeholders across New York on the Foundation’s behalf.
- Oversee the work of consultants, when necessary.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

This is an extraordinary opportunity for an experienced policy leader who wants to make an impact and lead a thoughtful change effort throughout New York State, during a pivotal time for children, youth and families. In this, the program officer will be a strategic leader with a deep commitment to serve the needs of New York State young people and families with accuracy, responsiveness, and a passion to improve the foster care system.

The program officer will lead with integrity and strive to ensure a culture of open communication and trust with partners, grantees and the families and youth served to maximize resources and prevent children from being removed from their families. The new leader will report directly to the foundation executive director, and collaborate closely with the foundation board of directors, all of whom are eager to enable the long-term success of the foundation and improve the overall quality of support to youth in the child welfare system.

Some of the priority issues for the program officer to address include, but are not limited to, the following:

Develop, implement and monitor New York State plans

The program officer will serve as a lead or partner on the Foundation's existing state work and will collaborate to develop future plans based on the Foundation's strategy and objectives. The Foundation is particularly interested in candidates who understand the landscape of New York State child welfare systems and can propose strategically sound new service programs for the Foundation to maximize its impact. Strong research skills and the ability to support plans and proposals with rigorous data and analysis will be essential to success in the role. The program officer should constantly be learning more about what truly works to improve outcomes for children — and how to incorporate new ideas and approaches into the Foundation's work. In addition to new program development, the program officer will form deep partnerships with state and county agencies and other funders to work within the system to achieve specific improved outcomes. The program officer will also support advocacy and media outreach to achieve policy and regulatory reform in counties and at the state level and strategically direct grant-making to nonprofits that can scale successful programs.

Conduct existing work and propose new work with a priority on advancing racial equity

The Foundation is deeply committed to [advancing racial equity](#) in child welfare. Alarming racial disparity rates exist at all points in New York's child welfare system. The Foundation believes that prevention, removal, placement and reunification policies and practices should be anti-racist, intentionally promote racial equity and seek to be reparative. To that end, Foundation trustees recently adopted new [Race Equity Values](#) and a more [racially just approach to grant-making](#). The program officer must play a key role in ensuring that all new grants and initiatives are determined and evaluated through a racial equity lens, as well as refreshing current work and strategic priorities to reflect the Foundation's commitment to racial equity. As the Foundation's priorities and approaches evolve, the program officer will seek input and guidance from internal and external partners in order to translate the Foundation's stated principles into plans for action.

Manage relationships with grantees, potential grantees, and other partners

The program officer will identify and build connections with current and prospective grantees; therefore, strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate seamlessly across a diverse range of contacts will be essential. In partnership with prospects and the Foundation's executive director, the program officer will develop proposal ideas and then shepherd those proposals through the Foundation's approval process. Other relationship-building tasks include site visits with grantees, frequent check-in calls and any other interactions that will help achieve significant impact; the Foundation is seeking a perceptive and skilled communicator who can spot these opportunities for greater impact as they arise. In addition, the program officer will build new relationships with a broad network of other partners who may help further the Foundation's goals.

Recognize and capitalize on new opportunities for impact as they arise

As a relatively small foundation with limited administrative staff, the Foundation is well-positioned to be nimbler and more responsive than larger organizations when new opportunities for impact arise. The program officer should keep abreast of new possibilities for impact and bring them to the attention of the executive director and the board. The Foundation's process is not bogged down in excessive red tape; smart, innovative and effective ideas can be fast-tracked. The program officer role is a chance for a savvy and strategic thinker to move quickly and implement new approaches that will make a real difference for New York children and families.

Manage the provision of technical assistance to grantees and other partners

When the Foundation's grantees and other partners require technical assistance, the program officer is responsible for ensuring projects are progressing towards intended outcomes. The program officer will be expected to provide technical assistance both directly and through managing the work of hired consultants.

Assist in the production and management of internal and external communications

The program officer will play a lead role in drafting and editing many of the published resources found on the [Foundation's website](#): newsletters, reports, white papers and more. The program officer will also communicate regularly and extensively with the Foundation's board of trustees as well as supervisory members of partner organizations.

Adapt quickly to other projects and assignments as necessary

As a small and nimble organization, the Foundation seeks candidates who can quickly adapt to a variety of new assignments as necessary. These new tasks may be requested by the Foundation's board or executive director; possible examples include developing direct-service programs with young people in collaboration with grantee partners or providing ongoing technical assistance and consultation on implementation.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The successful candidate will have:

- Passion for driving positive change for communities, families and young people.
- An optimistic but pragmatic problem-solving perspective; a commitment to envisioning and creating change.
- Skills and motivation to interact effectively with a diverse group of people from varied professional and cultural backgrounds.
- A record working on program development and implementation with local communities, nonprofits and/or government agencies.
- Excellent collaboration skills to find synergies and maximize impact with fellow staff, child welfare government agencies, private providers, advocates, young people and community-based organizations.
- Strong research and analysis skills; the ability to make data-driven decisions and explain them convincingly and compellingly to stakeholders.
- Sound judgment and strong interpersonal and communication (verbal and written) skills and the ability to be a highly engaged listener.
- Ability to work independently, assess priorities and take initiative to excel without significant supervision.
- At least eight years work experience in child welfare or a related field, lived experience with public systems and/or with communities of color, and a graduate degree are pluses.
- Willingness to travel monthly across the state as needed.



About Redlich Horwitz Foundation

Overview

Founded in 1986 by Catherine Redlich and Robert Horwitz, the Redlich Horwitz Foundation has provided financial support and implementation assistance to improve outcomes in areas of interest to them, most recently in foster care practice and policy.

While the Foundation is now best known for its efforts to ensure that every child has a safe and loving home, in its earlier years RHF supported diverse initiatives in education, criminal justice, drug policy, child welfare, and global health. The Foundation's first grants supported major national and international nonprofits, but evolved over time to help smaller organizations implement innovative, impactful programs. As then-residents of New Jersey, Rob and Cathy, through the Foundation, also funded policy reform, successfully spearheading efforts to legalize needle exchange programs in New Jersey to curtail the spread of AIDS and to achieve sentencing reform. The Redlich Horwitz Foundation worked with New Jersey based foster-care organizations to develop a mentoring program for foster youth, to promote adoption of older or hard-to-place children, and to provide financial support for young adults leaving foster care.

In 2012, after moving to upstate New York, Cathy and Rob made the decision to narrow the Foundation's grant-making focus significantly. Their objective was two-fold: to increase the impact of the Foundation's giving, and to become more proactively involved trustees. To that end, the Foundation hired its first executive director in 2013 and began a strategic planning process to determine the direction the Foundation would take going forward. The staff and trustees met with respected thought leaders, government officials, advocates, and philanthropies to learn more about opportunities and challenges facing New Yorkers and the systems that serve them. The result was a decision to focus the Foundation's mission on improving New York's foster care system to achieve better life outcomes for children in care and for those young adults aging out of the system.

Mission

The Foundation believes children do best when they are raised by their families of origin, where they have a strong sense of love, belonging and community. We believe children should remain with their families whenever possible, and that all caregivers—birth, foster and kinship—should have access to the same types and levels of support, including financial, programmatic, and therapeutic.

Every child who must enter foster care should live with a well-supported family—preferably with kin relatives or someone they know—and should leave foster care to a stable, permanent family as soon as is safe. While short-term residential placement is a necessary part of the continuum of care for some high-needs children, it is rarely an effective long-term solution. When we value our foster and kinship parents as the heroes they are, and provide the financial and therapeutic services they need to care for children who have experienced trauma, we will not have a system dependent on institutionalizing children, and families will be able to reunite and thrive.

The Foundation works to accelerate change by partnering with county and state leaders, the courts, nonprofits, foundations and grassroots advocates. We seek to improve practice and policy in support of increasing preventive services, reducing residential placements through kin-first practices, improving supports for all foster families, increasing community-based services for children and families, and implementing other strategies proven to keep families safely together or expedite the path to permanency.

To that end, we support and work collaboratively with other stakeholders to implement thoughtful, data-informed policies and programs that:

- Promote child welfare systems that are racially just and prioritize family preservation, engagement and family-based care;
- Ensure that every child exits the foster care system into a permanent, loving family through timely reunification, adoption, kin guardianship or another lifelong adult connection; and
- Improve the overall wellbeing of youth and families involved with the child welfare system in New York.

Values

The Foundation is doubling-down on its commitment to invest in a more racially-just approach to supporting families and communities. One important step towards this commitment is for us to strengthen our values that drive our decision-making, grant-making and strategic processes.

- People of color and their communities understand themselves best and are experts in framing challenges and developing solutions to achieve child and family wellbeing, in the child welfare system and other systems that disproportionately negatively impact them.
- Children do best with their families of origin. Government should not remove children from their parents unless legally justified to do so. Moreover, allegations of abuse should be treated differently than allegations of neglect.
- Families of color should not be disproportionately disrupted by the child welfare system due to current and historical racist policies and oppression; prevention, removal, placement and reunification practices should be anti-racist, intentionally promote racial equity and seek to be reparative.
- Communities of color should be resourced equally to white communities, and cross-system barriers to doing so should be dismantled.
- Families and communities should be provided with adequate resources and support to sustain themselves. All caregivers—birth, foster and kinship—should have access to the same types and levels of support, including financial, programs and services, therapeutic and clinical.
- Communities should be involved in determining the types of resources and support available to them, and these should be culturally responsive.

Priorities

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation's four priorities drive its work to improve the child welfare system by expediting permanency, reducing residential care, supporting caregivers and strengthening prevention.

Advance Racial Equity

Families of color should not be disproportionately disrupted by the child welfare system due to current and historical racist policies and oppression. Children do best when raised by their families of origin and government should not remove children unless legally justified to do so. Alarming racial disparity rates exist at all points in NY's child welfare system – from the rate of SCR calls to investigations, removals, congregate care placements, lengths of stay in care, and young people aging out. RHF believes that prevention, removal, placement and reunification policies and practices should be anti-racist, intentionally promote racial equity, and seek to be reparative. Families and communities should be provided with adequate resources and support to sustain themselves. All caregivers—birth, foster and kinship—should have access to the same types and levels of support, including financial, programs and services, therapeutic and clinical.

Further, families and communities of color are best positioned to frame existing problems and develop solutions to achieve child and family wellbeing. We recognize that we don't have all the answers but in the coming months and years, RHF will work to cede power to youth and families and support efforts across the state to dismantle racist policies and practices that perpetuate these disproportionately negative outcomes for families of color.

Expedite Permanency

RHF believes that the most critical priority for children in foster care is timely transition to a permanent and loving family. Foster care should never be seen as a long-term solution: in order to thrive, children need supportive adults who love them unconditionally and whom they can depend on for their lifetimes. We believe that efforts which lead to reunification, adoption, or guardianship are best for children in care.

Spurred on by federal data showing poor performance on critical measures of permanency, New York now is focused on improving permanency outcomes for children across the state. The 2016 federal review ranks New York 50th and 48th in the country on federal measures for timeliness and rates of permanency for children in care for more than a year. Further, OCFS MAPS data show that over 1700 older youth in foster care have a permanency goal of APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) and thus are destined to age out without a permanent family. The state and counties recognize that they can and must do better for our most vulnerable children and families and have embarked upon comprehensive reform efforts.

In partnership with their provider agencies and the courts, state and local government agencies have invested in thoughtful, data-driven improvement plans. The Foundation is pleased to work with OCFS, ACS, county departments of social services, and provider agencies to accelerate improvements in business process, policy and practice so that all children in NY foster care can achieve timely and meaningful permanency.

Prevent Removals

Too often, families become involved in the child welfare system not due to abuse or neglect, but because of poverty and lack of community supports. Families come to the attention of child welfare when they are experiencing unstable housing, domestic violence, substance use or mental health treatment needs, or lack of concrete resources.

RHF is committed to supporting community-based prevention efforts that cultivate thriving families and communities. We support the use of services that preclude child welfare system involvement, as well as those that prevent removal, disruption and step-ups. By providing families with the concrete and therapeutic supports they need, families can stay safely together or more quickly reunite if they have been separated.

Reduce Residential Care

A permanency-focused foster care system is family-centered; it is structured and funded in a way that promotes placing a child entering care with a relative or close family friend (such as a godparent). If no such resource is available, the next best choice is a well-trained and well-supported foster family. Only in rare situations—for example when the child is a risk to themselves and/or to others—should short-term residential treatment be recommended. Realigning the state’s resources and policies to focus on family-based care is best for children, families, and taxpayers.

Unfortunately, New York has grown dependent on an excessive use of higher cost and, at times, prolonged residential care instead of prioritizing family-based, kinship, and foster-family placements. In many cases, children are placed in residential care either because kin have not been identified or because foster-family capacity has not been developed in the particular jurisdiction. In fact, counties outside of NYC on average place 26% of children in residential care compared to the national average of 13%. If the state did not include NYC, New York would have the fifth highest percentage of residential placements nationally.

The 2018 federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) prioritizes preventive services and family-based foster care over residential care by limiting reimbursements for residential placements based on length of stay and therapeutic need. RHF’s Family First Readiness Initiative is working in partnership with the state’s Transition Fund to provide technical assistance to 19 counties to prioritize kin-first placement policies and practices, and reducing residential placements to the national average of 12%. RHF is also supporting provider agencies as they work to provide more services to families and children in the community and the home rather than on residential campuses.

Support Excellent Caregivers

There is widespread agreement in the child welfare field that children in foster care should be with loving and nurturing families to achieve strong permanency and well-being outcomes. Whenever possible, this family should include kin – a relative or other adult that knows the child well, such as family friends, neighbors, or godparents. Federal and state laws indicate a strong preference for kinship care, and research confirms that children do best in placements with someone they know and trust. In fact, 30% of children in foster care across the country live with kin families, and some jurisdictions far surpass that number.

When kin are not available to step in, children need excellent foster parents who are well-prepared to address traumatic experiences and committed to helping them return to their parents. A high-functioning foster care system is structured and funded in a way that strives to make the first placement one with kin and to recruit, develop, and support the best possible foster parents for children who cannot safely live with their parents.

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation supports efforts in recruiting excellent foster parents.

Leadership

Sarah Kroon Chiles, Executive Director



Sarah Chiles joined the Foundation in 2013 as its first executive director and, in partnership with the board of trustees, helped the Foundation develop its new strategic direction. She has overall operational responsibility for the Foundation's grant making, the implementation of its mission objectives, and its relational networks with grantees, foster youth, government agencies, and policymakers. Sarah was most recently vice president at the Thomson Reuters Foundation, where she headed the NY office. Previously, Sarah was a vice president with SeaChange Capital Partners, a philanthropic network focused on providing growth capital to exceptional education nonprofits, and prior to that served as the director of programs for the NYU Stern School of Business's Berkley Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. During her tenure at NYU, she launched and directed the Stewart Satter Program in Social Entrepreneurship and oversaw the Social Venture Competition and grant making for the Satter Social Entrepreneurship Fund. Earlier in her career, Sarah worked in investment banking and directed a nonprofit social venture operated by a consortium of environmental groups. Sarah serves on the Steering Committee of the national Youth Transition Funders Group, is the co-chair of the Foster Care Work Group and is a co-coordinator of the NYC Foster Care Funders Group. Sarah is a graduate of Middlebury College and the NYU Stern School of Business.

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Redlich Horwitz Foundation in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received as soon as possible.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Kim Brettschneider
RHF@wittkieffer.com

Equality and equity are core values at the Redlich Horwitz Foundation. We strive to create workplaces that reflect the communities we serve and where everyone feels empowered to bring their full, authentic selves to work. The Foundation is committed to providing equal opportunity for all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, personal appearance, family responsibilities, matriculation or any other characteristics protected under federal, state or local law.