

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

New Jersey Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Project

Component 1- Connect to Family & Connect to Well-Being

Questions? Email us anytime at dcfaskrfp@dcf.state.nj.us

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IMPORTANT CLARIFICATIONS

On page 30 of the RFP, the Appendices should also include the following document:

#36 A 60 day sample schedule of well-being (life skills) activities and sample educational incentives program for attendance.

#37 At your option, citations and references to materials cited in the Narrative may be attached as #37 instead of in the body of the narrative.

- 1. Page 2, Child Trends – assess readiness for future outcome evaluation (including the testing of data collection procedures) – please clarify and provide representative examples if possible.**

Child Trends' evaluation approach includes designing and implementing rapid-cycle testing of intervention components and creating mechanisms to provide ongoing feedback to project stakeholders. Specifically, we foresee testing elements such as the screening, assessment, and referral process; the use of Success Coaches; improvement of data entry; and the usefulness of training. We will utilize a mix of quantitative and qualitative data sources for the participatory formative evaluation of the Connecting YOUth initiative and will ensure that each source of information maximizes the potential for research and practice improvement purposes and minimizes the burden on practitioners and youth.

- 2. Page 5, “The screening process will be a collaborative effort...” – there seem to be words omitted from this sentence, after “...and other relevant...”**

The screening process will be a collaborative effort between DCF, the awarded provider and their Success Coaches and other relevant agency partners.

- 3. Page 5, Population 2 will be served on a case by case basis – what will determine eligibility, and will Population 2 be part of the caseload number stated as “approximately 15?”**

The same screening criteria will be used for Population 2 on a case by case basis. Youth eligible in Population 2 will be included in the expected caseload of approximately 15.

- 4. Pages 5 & 8, Permanency Teams – page 5 says “in local CP&P office;” page 8 says “in-house and suggests potentially alternating meetings between screening/data review OR a Family Team meeting – please clarify.**

Both meetings address outcomes, next steps, strengths, needs and supports, however one meeting is systemic and the other is centered on and driven by a particular youth – demonstrating that Connecting YOUth is about both change at the individual and at the systems levels. This alternating style would continue every other month, however, the location can be decided based on availability and convenience for key participants.

- 5. Can one agency apply for all three components?**

Yes, one organization can apply for all 3 components. Within each component, one organization can apply for one, two or three counties. A separate proposal for each county and each component is required.

- 6. If there are not enough youth that meet the requirements to be involved in the program/do not want to participate, are youth from other counties eligible?**

This has not yet been determined by DCF.

- 7. How many youth have been identified in Union County as meeting the project requirements (for all 3 phases)?**

Please review the County Specific Data Sheets on the YARH website (<http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>) for any county of interest.

8. Can youth participate in one component and not others?

Yes.

9. Success Coaches – Our organization currently employs 2 experienced youth life skills teachers who have been working successfully under existing DCF-funded programs. They are certified teachers but do not have the clinical experience or Master’s credential and clinical experience indicated in the RFP for the YARH Success Coaches. We are hoping, if our proposal is funded, not to displace them and we hope to keep them working with the youth with whom they have established good connections. Is there any flexibility on the requirement for a Master’s degree and clinical service for the Success Coach positions?

No, DCF will be awarding programs that can fulfill requirements as outlined in this RFP. In addition DCF is receiving funding through a Cooperative Agreement with the Children's Bureau for all YARH funding, all key staff in awarded programs will need to be confirmed by the Children’s Bureau in collaboration with all parties involved.

10. Budgets–Will Cluster Budgeting be permitted in the YARH contracts, and if so, can we apply Clustering in our proposal budgets?

No.

11. Private Investigator – Our understanding of the RFP is that this is a suggested activity as appropriate, but not required. May we therefore exclude this as a specific budget line item and apply it as part of our Specific Allowance budget line?

Note: The reference to the private investigator is found on page 9 of the Component 1 RFP.

DCF is seeking to award programs that fulfill the requirements as outlined in this RFP. The awarded program will need to demonstrate how they will effectively conduct aggressive family finding.

12. On page 13, it states funds can be used for existing programs. Can funds from this grant be used to provide life skills to our transitional living program?

No.

13. What is the anticipated date of the award?

The award announcement will be made after all eligible proposals have been evaluated and scored and a funding recommendation is approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families. There is no specific time frame, but you will be notified via a letter and email.

14. How do “radical” permanency programs different from regular programs?

Permanency has been a long standing goal of the child welfare system, this is not meant to dismiss “regular” programs, however sometimes with older youth the focus shifts to independent living. Connecting YOUth programming will work to ensure every child has relational permanence. Some examples are starting with the goal of 35 new contacts for each youth and investing the time in the preparation of each young person themselves so they feel ready and have an understanding of their history and have strategies to be ready to be a part of a family. DCF is interested in aggressive attempts to invigorate relationships.

15. How often will the rapid cycle testing take place? What if the grant recipient's team does not agree with the recommendations of the evaluations?

Throughout the RCE phase, Child Trends will quickly analyze data, share findings with Connecting YOUth team and other stakeholders, who will then identify appropriate changes to be made to the intervention. Providers and youth will be a part of the decision making process.

16. Do we have to provide legal services of any kind? The description in the second page says that the grant aims to improve “legal” and relational permanency for youth?

This refers to the legal status of the youth, and DCF shall file papers with family court. No additional legal services would be required.

17. Could you provide clarification on what bringing “laser-like focus” means in this context?

Because of the needs of an older youth, permanency efforts can sometimes not be as intense or focused. At times we have lost the urgency of finding a family, and a youth’s goal switches to independent living. Through Connecting YOUth programming the goal now becomes finding a youth a family today.

18. Page 4 indicates that some exceptions are made for populations 2 and 3. Could you provide more context for the circumstances under which the exceptions would be made for populations 1 and 2?

Through this process we are hoping to learn together who is most appropriate for this type of programming. DCF did not want to rule out the oldest youth in care and so we wanted to provide room for a worker/young person/advocate to be able to recommend a youth who would be a good fit for this kind of work and have the ability to accept them into this program. Based on our data analysis from Phase I, we have an idea of who would benefit from this but if there is someone who doesn't neatly fit the criteria (LGBTQI, for example) but are in need and could benefit from this program that may be a young person to work with.

19. Are we expected to provide services to expecting mothers?

Yes, if they are eligible.

20. On page 7, it states that interventions by staff must be urgent and energetic. How do we demonstrate this in a quantifiable way?

This will be developed with providers once awarded. Something to think about is how often do staff currently interact with young people, or how many contacts have you made with family and other caring adults, multiply that. We expect to reduce the number of moves in/out of placement, and increase the number of youth whose first placement is their last placement. DCF is seeking providers who understand and can demonstrate that they can implement the urgent need to help youth achieve permanency.

21. Could you provide some context on the involvement in changes to independent living plans of the Assistant Commissioner, ED of OAL, Area Director, and Local Office Manager? What time frame would this happen? How long would they take to make this determination if an immediate decision is needed? Often, the information received in the entry of youth into programming is either incomplete or inaccurate and necessitates a different plan of action than initially thought.

Any approvals that need to take place immediately will be considered urgent and responded to appropriately. DCF plans to work with the provider agency and DCF leadership to ensure there is a coordinated and timely response.

22. How much funding from the budget should be allotted to the educationally based incentives? What are the ranges that are considered helpful versus excessive?

There are no minimum or maximum amounts outlined in the RFP. DCF will be seeking providers who can outline the strategic use of educationally based incentives that helps promote skills building and program buy-in.

23. What is sufficient evidence that we endorse the Youth Thrive framework?

The provider should be able to understand, and demonstrate, how the values are reflected in program operations (attract/retain staff, policy, training, etc.). How are youth engaged through their work?

24. Do the contingency plans in page 15 also have to be approved by the Assistant Commissioner, ED of OAL, Area Director, and Local Office Manager?

No.

25. Who pays for the 3-day Youth Thrive training?

But for staff time, DCF will pay for the training.

26. Who determines the administrative data that is provided and what criteria are you looking for?

Most administrative data is collected in DCF central office to minimize any inconvenience for the provider.

27. What happens if a partnering organization does not comply with a condition of an award? What consequence is there for parent agency?

Each provider will be working in partnership with DCF through this Connecting YOUth process. If there is an issue with a particular part of programming we will address this on a case by case basis and troubleshoot together to ensure the proper support of youth participants and sustain the integrity of the evaluation.

28. What happens if the program participants refuse to participate in the research? It is typically their prerogative to do this and part of ethical human research. What implications does this have for maintaining their confidentiality? What does “on-site” observations” mean in this context? Does this mean sitting in on group sessions or observations in the home?

Every necessary precaution will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Our hope is youth will participate but we cannot require it. As part of the evaluation, DCF and Child Trends will need to make site visits to collect qualitative data on services provided.

29. What limitations are there on overhead costs?

The Department recognizes that allowable general and administrative (G&A) costs are essential and legitimate costs of provider agencies and shall not adopt internal policies that arbitrarily or capriciously restrict or prohibit these costs. In instances where certain State appropriations and/or federal grants/contracts restrict or cap G&A costs, the Department will seek to fund these costs from discretionary funds at its disposal. If the Department is unable to provide funding, it is the provider agency's choice whether or not to accept such contractual obligations. Nothing in its policy precludes the Department from accepting State appropriations and/or federal grants/contracts that restrict G&A costs. The funds utilized for this RFP do not impose restrictions on G&A, however please refer to Section 4 of DCF's Cost Reimbursement Manual, found on DCF's website, for further information.

30. How are overhead costs being defined?

Please refer to DCF's Cost Reimbursement Manual Section 4 generally, Section 4.3 (Cost Objectives) specifically, for further information.

31. What limitations are being placed on executive pay?

Please refer to DCF's Cost Reimbursement Manual, Section 4.6, for further guidance on charging salaries to DCF funded initiatives.

32. What will not be funded by the grant?

Costs shall be allowed to the extent that they are reasonable, allocable, and allowable (in accordance with subsection 4.6, Allowable Items of Cost - General Standards for Allowable Costs and 4.7, Unallowable Items of Cost - General Standards for Unallowable Costs). Please refer to DCF's Cost Reimbursement Manual, Sections 4.6 and 4.7 for further guidance

33. What are defined as start-up costs and how much can be attributed to this?

Start-up costs are one-time expenses that are necessary to ready the program for implementation and the expenses are reasonable, allocable, and allowable. Examples include items such as office furniture, computers, telephones for staff hired for the program. Additional start-up funds are not available. All start-up costs must be funded with accruals. Applicants must provide a justification and

detailed summary of all expenses that must be met in order to begin program operations.

34. Will training be provided on therapeutic tools suggested, including Darla Henry's 3 5 7 Model and Sanctuary Model? These are expensive training. Should they be included in the budget or will those trainings, along with Youth Thrive, be part of the project training?

Training will be offered to Connecting YOUth providers in the form of orientation and ongoing TA. We ask that you demonstrate your interest in the trainings mentioned and/or your organization's capacity to train staff.

35. Will a sign in sheet serve as acceptable administrative data on participation or is a service receipt required?

Most administrative data will be collected from central office as youth are identified and referred for services. Additionally information to be collected will be identified in collaboration between the provider agency, DCF and Child Trends.

36. RFP page 7; Section C. Services to Be Funded. Regarding Connect to Family (1A) Intervention section - Trauma-informed activities and relationship-building:

Will DCF provide space for youth group activities in each of the pilot counties?

The provider agency is expected to identify space through community collaborations and other resources. DCF is not planning to make space available for these groups, however some space might be available.

37. RFP page 8; Section C. Services to be Funded. Regarding Connect to Family Activities: 1.

Convene radical permanence teams: Will DCF provide space to hold the Permanency Team and Family Team meetings in each of the pilot counties?

DCF can provide space for these meetings.

38. RFP page 12; Section D. Funding Information which states that 'Each of the three pilot counties will be awarded \$240,000 annually from April 1, 2016 through September 29, 2018:

Will the final year of the term be pro-rated for 6 months or will the full amount of \$240,000 be available for the time period of April 1, 2018 - September 29, 2018?

DCF will pro-rate the amount for the time period of April 1, 2018-September 29, 2018 however anticipates continuing services beyond this time if funds are available.

39.RFP page 16; Section E. Applicant Eligibility Requirements. Regarding the 3-Day Youth Thrive Training provided by DCF referred to under Training:

A. What specific topics will be covered in the 3-day training?

The protective and promotive factors of the Youth Thrive Framework.
<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youththrive>

B. How many staff from the awarded agency are expected to attend the training?

Key program staff are expected to attend.

C. Where will the training be held and will the cost of attending the training be covered by DCF?

Location is to be determined. DCF will cover the cost of training.

40.RFP page 14; Qualifications under Section E. Applicant Eligibility Requirements include that the awarded program must be 'Based in and deeply familiar with the youth services in the pilot county':

Is the awarded agency required to have a physical office in all three pilot counties?

The awarded agency should have a physical meeting space in the pilot county they are applying to provide services.

41. Will the awarded provider have access to trainings in addition to the ones mentioned in the RFP?

DCF will provide all trainings required. If there are additional trainings the provider would like to provide that would be at the provider's expense.

42. Will providers be provided with Connect Youth/Family ideology and program layout prior to when the RFP is due?

Please see <http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>

43. Is the State looking ideally for one provider to be awarded all 3 Components?

DCF intends to award programs that can fulfill the requirements of the RFP.

44. For accounting purposes, do you require an audit from an outside firm?

Yes

45. Do we serve only population 14-21 or all populations for life skills?

Programs will serve eligible youth between the ages of 14-21.

46. What is the expected caseload of youth to success coaches? Is it 15 per success coach?

Approximately 15 youth per success coach.

47. How are we going to be partnering with DCP&P? How involved should the agency be? How can we do this in a way that is safe for the youth?

The provider will meet monthly with key CP&P staff while providing services under 1A. The provider will meet with CP&P as needed under 1B, at minimum through the County Based Implementation Committees.

48. Can a new agency or “start-up” apply for this RFP?

Yes.

49. During the presentation, you mentioned a series of assessments required for the provider, where is this listed in the RFP?

Please see page 14.

50. The expected census level is 30, are there any other census levels expected for this component?

The expected level of service for 1A is approximately 30. There is not currently an expected level of service for 1B.

51. If we have additional funding/resources that already in use, can we supplement them, or are we limited to just what is included in the program model? Is it required that we discuss them with you prior to implementing them? Should we include them in the budget narrative portion of our proposal?

This should be discussed with DCF prior to implementation. A decision will be made on a case by case basis with the integrity of the intervention at the forefront. Please provide as much detail as possible.

52. If the agency is applying for all three counties, should they submit a separate proposal for each county?

Yes.

53. Do all purchases for technology need to be approved by the Office of Information and Technology? Does this apply to a website that the agency may create?

Most technology purchases will need to be approved by OIT that does not include a website.

54. Is the agency required to purchase specific software in order to participate in this component of the project?

Not at this time.

55. Are references for data to be included in the narrative portion of the proposal, or can the agency include those references in an appendix?

Applicants can include references for data and other information as a footnote in the narrative or as a separate attachment in the appendices. If the applicant finds that footnoting references in the narrative might put the narrative over the allotted page limit, please include the references as a separate attachment in the appendices. There will not be points taken for footnoting in the margin of the narrative.