



## **REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF COMMITMENT to**

### **Our Partners in Burlington, Mercer, and Union Counties due by May 6, 2015.**

In October 2013, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) was one of 18 jurisdictions to receive a Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) Federal Planning Grant award. This project is led by DCF's Office of Adolescent Services (OAS), working in partnership with three national organizations: Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), Child Trends, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). The purpose of the planning grant is to assess, plan, and implement holistic and comprehensive strategies and solutions to end youth homelessness and promote housing stability, education/employment, permanency, and well-being outcomes for young people who have experience in the child welfare system. More specifically, the project focuses on youth 14-17 years old who are currently in foster care, youth 18-21 who are aging out of care, and youth up to age 21 who are homeless with prior experience in the child welfare system. As you know, OAS and the YARH planning team have spearheaded a number of activities, events and opportunities to get input from representatives of community organizations, other public and private agencies and youth themselves.

The Federal government has now released the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for Phase II implementation funding available only to the 18 YARH grantees, 5 grantees will be awarded implementation funding. NJ-DCF, with great help from our YARH project partners, staff, youth, and a diverse group of community stakeholders, is getting ready to submit a proposal to apply for YARH Phase II implementation funding and was recently informed that these proposals are due on 5/26/15.

NJ-DCF has analyzed data, completed a needs assessment, and plans to pilot an intervention focused on permanency, culture, life skills, mentoring, education, and supportive housing for youth in foster care being served through Local Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) Offices in Burlington, Mercer, and Union Counties (7 Offices total). The proposed intervention will restructure current adolescent services and programs, implement additional programming, and create a community engagement model that will ensure the success of the intervention strategies that will pilot in these counties.



**NJ-DCF is seeking public and private stakeholder partners that:**

1. Believe relationships, social capital/network, and community connections, are critical for a youth's successful transition to adulthood.
2. Strive for racial equity and cultural humility.
3. Understand the impact of trauma on youth development.
4. Use a protective factors perspective or lens that sees youth's inherent strengths and potential, and nurtures and develops their strengths (for example, <http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive>).
5. Know that a local community knows their youth best and is collectively responsible for the success of their youth.
6. Believe youth voice is imperative to any system change that involves youth.
7. Work collaboratively with others, knowing that different stakeholders have different perspectives, experiences, and goals--all of which are important and need to be valued and respected.
8. Willing and able to share data and participate in a learning process to analyze implementation and assess progress on achieving outcomes for youth and families
9. Consider themselves a life-long learner, willing to grow, listen, and be solutions-focused in their approach.

**At this time, we are asking interested partners to provide a one page letter outlining your support, interest, and/or potential resources that can be leveraged in this project.** Please include a contact person for your agency with an email and phone number. NJ-DCF will send more detailed information regarding the proposed intervention strategies and potential ways that our community partners can support this important work. **Please email these letters to: [dcfaskrfp@dcf.state.nj.us](mailto:dcfaskrfp@dcf.state.nj.us) by May 6, 2015.**

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS IMPORTANT WORK!!!**



*Draft letter*

Re: Letter of Support-YARH

Dear Commissioner Blake,

Our organization would like to express our support and interest for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' application for the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Phase II implementation funding (HHS-2015-ACF-ACYF-CA-0961).

We believe that we could play a role in the intervention efforts that will pilot in {CHOOSE ONE OR MORE Burlington/Mercer/Union County} by....

*POTENTIAL OPTIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN LETTER:*

- 1) Agree to participate in an Implementation Steering Committee if DCF is awarded Phase II funding.
- 2) Agree to participate in trainings offered to my community that will help to create a standardized culture of practice as it relates to engaging, assessing, and planning with and for young people in care.
- 3) Agree to partner with organizations in my county who might be awarded a Phase II contract and are serving adolescents in the care of CP&P.
- 4) Agree to donate or provide {INSERT potential services, supports, and resources} to this intervention in {CHOOSE ONE OR MORE Burlington/Mercer/Union County}
- 5) Your choice, please specify