

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

New Jersey Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Project

Component 2 - Connect to Achievement

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

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IMPORTANT CLARIFICATIONS

#36 At your option, citations and references to materials cited to in the Narrative may be attached as #36 instead of in the body of the narrative.

- 1. Page 6, item VI, 2-year commitment requirement for “Near Peers” – though of course we see the value in an extended, consistent relationship between the “Near Peers” and participating youth, we are concerned that it will be very difficult, even with good incentives like college credits, work study hours, etc., to secure a 2-year commitment from the “Near Peers” that will last the 2 years.**

Please see evaluation activities under pages 11 and 12, see #6 on page 12. Also see Evaluation Activities on pages 21-22, see #6.

- 2. Page 11, Evaluation Activities -special data collection requirements – can these be delineated more specifically, with representative examples?**

No not at this time.

- 3. What are the educational requirements of the Mentor Coordinator and Part Time Youth Worker?**

Applicants need to be able to demonstrate that the Mentor Coordinator and Part-Time Youth worker have qualifications, experience, and credentials that will effectively implement the program requirements as outlined in the RFP.

4. Can one agency apply for all three components?

Yes, one organization can apply for all 3 components. A separate proposal for each component is required.

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

Yes

8. YARH Eligibility - Can youth who we are currently serving who were referred to us by DCF receive services under YARH if they meet eligibility criteria?

Yes however the DCF and the Connecting YOUth Project Team would need to approve this referral.

9. Education Champion – the RFP calls for a full-time professional with a very specific combination of credentials and experience. We are concerned about being able to find someone who will meet every one of these requirements. Will any flexibility be provided on any of the stated requirements?

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. Mentor Coordinator and Youth Workers - Are there level of service/number of cases (number youth served) requirements for the Mentor Coordinator and/or Youth Worker positions?

Please review the County Specific Data Sheets on the YARH website (<http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>) for any county of interest. These data sheets provide county specific information regarding youth in care 14-21.

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

No.

12. 40% of hours in District Office:

A. How will the interaction between Staff and DCP&P occur?

It is recommended that there be consistent communication between provider agency and CP&P Local Offices

B. If EC must complete 40% of hours in district office, how will this be managed and supervised by the provider agency?

The EC will be managed through regular and consistent communication and supervision by the provider agency. It is recommended that there be consistent communication between provider agency and CP&P Local Offices as well.

C. How will this ratio affect field work and activities that must happen in the community?

Although rare exceptions may be made with prior approval, this ratio was decided based on the need in each CP&P Local Office.

D. What documentation is expected that will provided to demonstrate the 40% to 60% ratio?

Documentation on an employee timesheet or something similar would be sufficient.

E. Does this mean the DCP&P worker will have supervisory authority over the EC?

No, the EC will be an employee of, and supervised by the provider agency. Through regular meetings between provider agency and CP&P Local Offices, each CP&P Local Office will have input on the prioritization of work as needed.

F. Will the EC be allowed to work on activities related to the implementation of the grant that do not involve supporting the DCP&P worker, but are time-sensitive and/or essential for the program during her/his time in the district office?

Yes.

G. What type of activities will the EC be involved in supporting while in the district office?

Please see #1 on page 3.

H. What happens if the Providing Agency gives the EC a directive and the DCP&P gives another? Whose priority or deadline supersedes?

Through regular meetings between provider agency and CP&P Local Offices, both parties are encouraged to collaboratively designate the EC's tasks and deadlines. The provider is expected to broker a positive and collaborative relationship with the CP&P Local Offices.

I. Please define what is considered to "Assist the CP&P case worker to integrate educational goals and objectives into the Transitional Plan for YOUTH Success (TPYS)."

Educational Champion(s) will have specific knowledge and expertise of the education system in order to develop collaborative relationships between CP&P and the school districts in that county, track educational status, progress, and outcomes, and most importantly team with the youth and their supports (CP&P workers, resource parents, etc.) to understand and address academic needs and goals. This intervention is designed to provide youth with increased academic advocacy, access to more education related resources in the community and at school (including tutoring, supplemental educational and social opportunities, college bound programming, career and technical education summer academic enrichment, and guidance in educational decision making and ultimately facilitate the necessary supports and resources to promote a stronger likelihood that youth will achieve academic success as defined by the youth and their team.

J. Please provide additional clarification regarding the fact that, "The EC staff will work with CP&P staff to ensure that the educational information in the child welfare information system for each youth is complete, thorough, and up to date."

As part of case conferencing, the EC will encourage and remind CP&P staff to collect and report youth specific education data to be entered into the child welfare information system.

K. Does this mean the EC will conduct data entry work for the DCP&P?

The EC will not enter data for CP&P staff, however, they will be aware of what information needs to be collected in order to appropriately provide support for youth to achieve their education goals, and therefore will encourage CP&P staff to ask for that information and enter it into the child welfare information system.

13. Educational Records:

A. What happens in cases where educational records are incomplete or unavailable via the educational district?

See page 3. Providers are expected to develop or strengthen relationships with school districts.

B. What happens when there is an incorrect diagnosis?

With CP&P staff, the EC will work to correct any incorrect information in a youth's record.

14. LOS:

A. What specific services are expected for the families?

Specific services are designed for each youth's individual needs, and families will be considered as part of that coordination.

B. What will be the LOS for this grant?

Please review the County Specific Data Sheets on the YARH website (<http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>) for any county of interest. These data sheets provide county specific information regarding youth in care 14-21.

15. Collaboration: Who are the key stakeholders in Mercer County's County Based Implementation Committee?

This will be more clearly defined after the YARH awards are made.

16. Software :

A. Are there pieces of Software that we are not allowed to use?

No, not to our knowledge if the software is necessary and appropriate.

B. What type of software is permitted?

You will be required to submit the software purchase for review and fiscal approval.

C. What type of technology is permitted to identify mentors and what is not? (pg 7)

As technology is continuously developing, there is not a complete list of what can/cannot be used in existence.

17. Definitions:

A. What constitutes “creative” in matching mentors and mentees?

Please see page 7, X. DCF is seeking applicants to use technology and other strategies (as identified by the applicants) for youth driven mentor matching.

B. What constitutes a “Youth Worker” with experience in the child welfare system per county? Could you please provide examples of the type of experience you are looking for?

Applicants need to be able to demonstrate that the Youth worker have qualifications, experience, and credentials that will effectively implement the program requirements.

18. Near-Peer Mentors:

A. The near-peer mentors are composed primarily of college students who are transient and may believe that they can make a two year commitment at the time of committing to the program. However, they may find they are unable to once they advance in their college careers or graduate. What will be the consequences for the agency if the college students are unable to meet their 2 year commitments?

Please see evaluation activities under pages 11 and 12, see #6 on page 12. Also see Evaluation Activities on pages 21-22, see #6.

B. What will happen for college students who do not live in the area and go home for the summer or to summer programs? How will agencies be held accountable for this?

Initial planning including preparing youth for such an event should be included within the program.

- C. The goal is for the Near-Peer mentorship relationship to extend through high-school graduation. What happens if a mentee begins the relationship in the senior year of high school and the mentee graduates at the end of the school year? Does this then still require the 2 years of mentorship or does this mean that 17-year olds are precluded from participating if they are seniors in high-school?**

Identified mentors will be “near peer” and professional mentors. The provider agency is responsible for coordinating the needs of the mentee and whether their needs can be met by the mentor. The mentee can continue to receive a mentor beyond high school graduation.

19. Required Professional Development:

Regarding the trainings and professional development opportunities that will provided, will the costs be assumed by DCP&P or will the agencies have to assume the costs of the trainings?

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

20. Data Collection and Research:

- A. Will we be afforded training on the type of data that will be collected for the evaluation activities and how we have to set-up the data collection process?**

To the extent possible, administrative data will be collected through DCF central office. However qualitative data will be collected at the provider agency with advance notice as to minimize the burden on provider agencies. Providers will receive any training on data collection if it is needed.

- B. Is there a limitation on the type of data the agency is permitted to collect beyond what DCP&P requires?**

No, however the use or publication of this data is subject to legal and ethical guidelines. All data generated is the property of DCF. DCF owns the data for this project. If you wish to use the data collected for your organization only for other purposes, you must provide us with your research plan and submit a request. Our website contains our research protocols at <http://nj.gov/dcf/childdata/research/>

- C. We are expected to facilitate and support on-site meetings and observations with DCF and project team staff and evaluators for the purpose of data collection. Ethical data collection and human research practices indicate that we must guarantee**

confidentiality and no consequences for those that do not wish to participate in the research. What happens if any of the youth or the mentors do not wish to participate in the study. Will we be held accountable for that? Is it a condition of services or does the provisions of services prevail?

The provider agency will not be held accountable and services will continue.

D. If we have independent funding from another institution, are we prohibited from using independent funds for independent evaluations?

DCF owns the data for this project. If you wish to use the data collected for your organization only for other purposes, you must provide us with your research plan and submit a request. Our website contains our research protocols at <http://njgov/dcf/childdata/research/>

21. Budget:

A. 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. There 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.

B. 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

C. 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.

D. 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

E. 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.

22. Page 2, Section B Background paragraphs 2 and 3-2:

A. Please explain Connecting YOUth.

Connecting YOUth is the name of New Jersey's Youth At-Risk of Homelessness federal grant. For additional information, please visit <http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>.

B. Would the selected organization be required to serve all three population sets? Would it be acceptable to serve two of the three populations?

Yes, the selected organization would be required to serve eligible youth in all three populations. No it would not be acceptable to serve two of the three populations.

C. Please explain "rapid cycle testing".

Rapid Cycle Evaluation (RCE) is an approach for quickly determining the effectiveness of specific modifications to an intervention, in terms of its association with very short-term outcomes, taking advantage of easily accessible data. 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.

23. Page 3, Section B Background, Subtitle Connect to Achievement, subsection 1 f and g:

A. Please define “Education Passport”.

An “education passport” will be designed for high school aged youth to track and monitor progress as well as high specific short and long term educational goals.

B. Please explain “Case Conference”.

Provide expertise and community resources as needed in a case conference setting with CP&P workers and program staff.

24. Page 5, Section C Services to be Funded, subsection Service Components

Is there a proposed minimum salary for each of the three mandatory positions?

No.

25. Page 23, Section B Supporting Documents, Part I f

Please clarify if completeness (item f) is a separate item to address in our narrative or is it shown as a sample for the order of sections?

Completeness is not a specific section to address as part of the Narrative but it will be evaluated as part of the review process.

26. Page 23, Section B Supporting Documents, Part II

If an item in the Appendices is not applicable, is it preferable to indicate the item number and specifically state “not applicable”?

Yes, please clarify with item number and N/A.

27. Page 2, Section B Background, continuation of paragraph 2

Is there a minimum number of youth the selected organization should expect to serve?

Please review the County Specific Data Sheets on the YARH website (<http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>) for any county of interest. These data sheets provide county specific information regarding youth in care 14-21.

28. Just to clarify, the grant award of \$150,000 is per year, for three years, per county?

Yes.

29. The education passport is a new concept that was developed specifically for this pilot program, correct?

Yes.

30. Are peer mentors precluded from participating in solely social activities?

Social activities should be included in building the mentor/mentee relationship as appropriate.

31. Is it appropriate that some staff be subcontracted to an outside agency?

Please provide as much detail as possible in your proposal regarding a subcontract relationship when this is proposed.

32. In the RFP, it states that within 120 days it is expected that the agency be up to full census, and that the number of youth at risk is listed on the website. What is the number of youth considered to be 'full census'?

That will be determined when the awards are made.

33. Who makes the decision as to the schedule of agency staff?

The agency can determine the schedule of their staff, however planning with OAS and CP&P should incorporate time needed for training and to be spent in the local offices.

34. When the EC is traveling between the agency and DCP&P, will the EC be reimbursed for travel expenses? Should this expense be included in the agency's proposed budget?

This expense should be clearly documented in the agency's proposed budget.

35. How will the EC and other agency staff be approved? Is there a specific application process? Should the staff be already identified? If so, should their resumes be included in the agency's proposal?

There is no specific application process, however if there are staff in mind when submitting your proposal, please include their resume(s).

36. Prior to offering a job to a job applicant, does the applicant need to be approved by you? If so, how long would this approval process take?

Yes. There is no specific timeframe at this point, however we will expedite this matter to bring staff on board as soon as possible.

37. As a follow up to question number 22, are start-up costs included in the \$150,000?

Yes.

38. Comment, not question...The requirements associated with the staff positions have not been a part of typical staff requirements in the past. This will require that an agency shift staff around and possibly need to seek out new staff.

DCF is piloting new service interventions, thus requiring new program models and staffing patterns. You should not provide in your proposal staff that do not meet the requirements.

39. Are there specific requirements for mentor eligibility, such as: fingerprinting, background checks, and other screenings?

Yes, best practices should be considered for screening and training mentors. DCF will work with the awarded providers to clarify specific screening requirements of mentors.

40. When referring to the authorized signatory would the signature of the agency's chief executive officer, or executive director suffice?

Yes.

41. On page five of the RFP where there is a reference to implementation of services, it is referring to providing services only in the county for which the agency has been awarded the grant, correct?

Yes.

42. 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.