

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

New Jersey Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Project

Component 3 - Connect to Home

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

Phone number and contact person for date of delivery:
Main Number: 609-888-7730

Contacts: Karen Schemmer
Loren LaBadie

Deliver proposal to: 50 East State Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0717

IMPORTANT CLARIFICATIONS

On page 33 of the RFP, the Appendices should also include the following documents:

#38-Attach a summary of the 20 units using the following table or a similar product as per page 27

#39-At your option, citations and references to materials cited to in the Narrative may be attached as Appendices #39 instead of in the body of the narrative.

- 1. Can applicants apply for just one component as opposed to all three?**

Yes, applicants may apply for just one component. YARH 1, 2 & 3 are separate RFPs.

- 2. Are Public Housing Authorities eligible to apply?**

No.

3. **Page 6, Geographic area – for Union County project, is it acceptable for all housing and most services to be located in the Elizabeth area as long as the CP&P youth served come from Central, East, and West Union County?**

Yes.

4. **Pages 12 - 13, Housing Screening and Assessment –**
- a. **Refers to 20 youth residing in housing units through the program – as project-based housing, is a housing unit defined by counting beds or residences? (Are studio apartments, 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms included, and how are they counted in terms of units?)**

Each housing voucher will be linked to one young adult living in one unit. At minimum a one bedroom unit is preferable.

- b. **Awardee to screen up to 10 youth per month – is that an inflexible maximum, and is there a minimum?**

This number is flexible. Ten youth was provided to outline an expectation of the screening capacity a provider may need. The number of youth screened may fluctuate with time.

Please also note 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.

- c. **Are the youth to be screened for housing placements coming from the Hub?**

Young adults will be preselected by DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team based on researched risk-factors that make them more likely to experience chronic homelessness as adults. These youth could potentially and already be registered on the Hub.

- d. **Under this YARH initiative, can we potentially serve and access the Component 3 Vouchers for youth who already were referred to us by DCF and placed in our 22-bed program, or would Component 3 Vouchers be available only to 20 new (not current) youth referred to us by DCF us under YARH?**

The vouchers offered through this new program will be available to youth identified by DCF specific to the YARH project. Youth who are eligible for these vouchers will likely be in a variety of different living arrangements which might include DCF contracted housing programs. Awarded programs will not be allowed to admit youth into this new program without DCF's knowledge and approval; they must fit the YARH criteria for admission.

5. Page 15, Forensic Specialist – this term is unfamiliar in this context; please provide more information.

Please see pages 15 and 16 of the RFP for required experience and expected duties of the Forensic Specialist.

6. Because the housing vouchers are through the Department of Community Affairs, will agencies be required to report into the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)?

Yes. Agencies awarded funding that includes Section 8 project based housing vouchers will be required to report into the HMIS system. Agencies who do not already report into the system will be required to pay a \$750 annual fee for reporting and having access to the system which needs to be factored into the budget.

7. Are awarded programs excepted to provide transitional housing, supportive housing and aid in finding section 8 housing units?

Applicants are required to secure 20 long term, stable housing units and be prepared to provide supportive services. Applicants who don't own housing units are expected to include an agreement or documentation that specifies the number of units that will be made available through a 15 year master lease and include the rental rates of those units. The agreement should be contingent upon award of funding.

8. 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.

9. 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 yet to be determined. DCF, the Connecting YOUth team and the provider will handle these matters on a program by program basis, if these circumstances arise.

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

Please see Phase I findings for an indication of the number of youth eligible for these services. Click on county of interest for youth identified as at risk of homelessness. http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/county_new.html

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

Yes. The expectation is that the provider agency and DCF work in collaboration to engage the youth to determine which of the eligible services are beneficial to the youth.

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

No.

13. What is not considered an innovative approach to supportive housing?

The RFP outlines expectations for the program model, services, and philosophy. As outlined on page 28 DCF is expecting the applicant to demonstrate innovative ideas to implement a new program model. DCF is unable to specifically outline an approach that is not innovative however the applicant's approach needs to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and ability to serve youth with high and complicated needs.

14. Does this program require that we provide transitional and supportive housing?

This housing model is a form of supportive housing, not transitional housing. However, services are not mandatory and service participation can't be used to impact the young person's housing. It is our expectation that the provider engage the youth to participate in services.

15. What is the LOL in each of the 5 main tiers identified?

This may refer to Level of Service (LOS). No concrete level of service has been determined. This model will look to provide housing and supportive services to youth who fit the tier four and tier five categories.

16. In this proposal it indicates that the 20 vouchers are provided in each service area to the target Population 2 and 3 or previous history of being in care with CP&P and who have been identified as Tier 4 and Tier 5. Does this mean that the grant recipient has the ability to turn down offering services to fire starters or persons identified as pyromaniacs?

This funding is meant to service our “highest needs youth”. It is our expectation that tier 4 and 5 young people identified for these services may have high needs. DCF plans to meet the housing needs of young people and supply or link them to supportive services where appropriate. If a provider feels strongly that the program/housing is not appropriate for a particular youth identified by DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team, the provider will need to consult with DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team before making a decision.

17. The proposal says that the youth in these programs will be screened into services by DCF staff and the Connection YOUTH project team. What happens if the grant recipient does not agree with the committee’s recommendations?

If a provider feels strongly that the program/housing is not appropriate for a particular youth identified by DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team, the provider will need to consult with DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team before making a decision. Please note however that this program is intentionally designed to serve high need youth.

18. Does the grant recipient have to pay for the trainings provided by DCF?

No.

19. What are the expectations to service participants who are only interested in housing?

A youth has the right not to participate in supportive services. The provider is responsible for utilizing comprehensive practices to engage youth. If the provider demonstrates chronic inability to engage youth in the supportive services, this will be discussed and reviewed with DCF.

20. What types of insurances and liabilities should be considered when working with participants who are sex offenders and fire starters? Would additional insurances be needed?

DCF cannot offer advice or guidance on an individual bidder's insurance needs or policy requirements. These should be discussed with your insurance provider. No specialized coverages are mandated by the RFP.

21. Could you provide more information on the young parents component? What is the LOL for the young parents? What are the age ranges of the children we have to meet with? What supervision requirements does the organization have to meet for the children?

There is no supervision requirement for the children. Please refer to the Expectant and Parenting Youth RFP for other questions.

22. What happens if the program participants refuse to participate in the research? It is typically their prerogative to do opt in and participation is typically optional to ensure ethical practices in 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.

23. What software is DCF expecting for us to use?

You are permitted to put software in your budget however it will be subject OIT review and approval as well as budgetary approval. You should describe and justify completely how the software shall be used as well as well as how it shall ensure the privacy and security of those you serve.

24. Is the RFP looking for the least structured/restrictive program for the most challenging youth?

The agency will have to propose the program/service model that they feel best meets the youth's needs as outlined in RFP while accomplishing the goals of the suggested philosophy, practice and model.

25. What if the awarded agency already has access to program vouchers?

The awarded provider will be responsible for implementing a new program and oversight of 20 new Project Based Section 8 housing vouchers and supportive services for these youth as outlined in this RFP.

26. Can the awarded program have restrictions on overnight visitors?

The awarded provider should have a guest policy in compliance with the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan. The plan indicates that DCA's policy limits visitation of any person to a maximum of thirty (30) days, cumulative, during the twelve (12) months comprising the household's annual certification period.

27. What if program apartments are not suitable for parent youth due to space?

If a program's unit can't appropriately accommodate a family's size, the expectation is that the provider will work with DCF and the Connecting YOUTH team to refer the family to appropriate housing. See DCA Housing Voucher Choice Program Administration Plan for information allowable family sizes per unit.

28. What additional training, if any, is the State providing?

Please see RFP for information on training. Further details will be made available to recipients of the grant awards.

29. Will JJC involved youth already be receiving treatment or services?

There may be circumstances where JJC involved youth are already linked with services as well as circumstances where the provider will need to align the youth with additional or initial services.

30. What if a young adult is ready but doesn't want to leave the program?

In the circumstance described in this question, the young adult may reside in the housing unit until their 26th birthday, unless their income is outside the allowable DCA guidelines to qualify them for the unit.

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

For information regarding Connecting YOUTH please visit <http://nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/yarh.html>.

32. Can the program start be later than April 1st?

See page 18. A specified date for program start has not been stated.

Questions Asked at the Bidder's Conference on 1/14/16

33. If the youth tenant takes the voucher with them, will it be replaced?

In the circumstance that DCF is able to receive a tenant based voucher for a youth which allows them to leave the program, the agency will receive a replacement Project Based Section 8 voucher. These circumstances are not automatic and still need to be identified.

34. Can you repeat the length of stay and where I can find it online? What is the length of stay for overnight visitors to the youth tenant?

The awarded provider needs to have a guest policy in compliance with the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan. The plan indicates that DCA's policy limits visitation of any person to a maximum of thirty (30) days, cumulative, during the twelve (12) months comprising the household's annual certification period.

Outside of guests there is not a length of stay for the program since this is a permanent supportive housing program. Youth will however be encouraged to move on from the program at age 26.

35. On page 13 of the RFP it talks about the linkage of an additional ten youth, can you clarify this? Is the agency expected to be screening for other vouchers or for housing generally?

The agency will be expected to screen youth in their county that DCF identifies as meeting specific risk of homelessness criteria. Not all youth will be appropriate or qualified for your program. Under such circumstances, the agency will screen the youth for other housing opportunities which may or may not be housing vouchers.

- 36. On page 12 it talks about youth who have left the program being able to come back and receive services after age 26, can you clarify this? Are youth expected to be able to come back to receive services if they are under age 26 and left the program?**

If a young adult under the age of 26 leaves the program, the agency may continue to provide services to the young adult if the agency has the capacity to do so.

- 37. What are the legal ramifications/liability for the agency if one of the youth from that agency is found to be responsible for starting a fire?**

Applicants need to consult with their insurance companies for guidance on the liability should such an incident occur.

- 38. Do the project-based vouchers convert to tenant-based vouchers when the youth leaves with a voucher? How long does this conversion process take?**

In the circumstance that DCF is able to receive a tenant based voucher for a youth which allows them to leave the program, the agency will receive a replacement Project Based Section 8 voucher. These circumstances are not automatic and still need to be identified.

- 39. For the project-based vouchers, can the agency have scattered sites or should all the units for the program be housed under one roof?**

The agency can have scattered sites.

- 40. Would DCF refer someone with active fire-setting issues or only with a previous history of fire-setting? If the agency is not capable of taking on a youth with this issue, what should the agency do?**

Yes. These vouchers are meant to serve youth with the "highest needs" and therefore there may be situations where youth have a previous or even recent history of fire-setting. If an agency learns of some information that makes them feel they are not capable of accepting a youth into their program, the agency needs to consult with DCF and the Connecting YOUth Planning Grant team before making a decision with regards to program acceptance or denial. Your proposal should address how your program will accept, welcome and address the needs of all youth.

41.If DCF is the referral source for this program, can the awarded agency recommend youth to take part in the program?

If the agency believes that a youth meets the criteria for this program, the agency needs to forward that information to DCF and the Connecting Youth Planning Grant team. Awarded programs will not be allowed to admit youth into this new program without DCF's knowledge and approval; they must fit the YARH criteria for admission.

42.What happens if there are more referrals to an agency than there are available housing slots? Is there a first come, first serve policy? Are the referral made based on available slots? Is there a no reject, no eject policy?

If there are more referrals than are available housing slots, the agency will be expected to screen the additional youth and refer them to the next most appropriate housing available. While there is no "no reject, no eject" policy, applicants for this RFP need to recognize that this housing model is meant to serve our highest need youth and thus design a structure and services around the youth that can adequately support them.

43.If a youth already has housing but could benefit from the services being offered through this RFP, are they eligible for this program?

Youth for this housing program and supportive services will be identified and approved by DCF and the Connecting Youth Planning Grant team.

44.Is the preference for one bedroom units or is congregate housing a viable option?

The preference is a one bedroom unit. Shared/congregate housing is not allowable.

45.Does the agency hold the master lease and then sublease the unit to the youth?

Yes

46.Will the 'no vacancy clause' be struck from the DCA contract for this program?

Yes

47. How will the agency deal with vacancies when a youth needs to attend an inpatient program for mental health or substance abuse purposes? Will the unit still be available for the youth upon discharge from the inpatient program? Who will be responsible for the rent during their absence?

If a household is absent from the assisted unit for an extended period because a household member is hospitalized, the program participant must provide written notice to the DCA Field Office Supervisor. The participant will be asked to provide an estimate of the hospitalization period to the Field Office Supervisor. Unless circumstances warrant the period of vacancy will not exceed 120 days or the anniversary of the HAP contract whichever comes first. The program manager, or designee, may grant an extension of up to an additional 60 days in the case of an illness or rehabilitation. However program participants are under a mandate that the household may not be absent from the unit for a period of more than 180 consecutive calendar days for any reason. Yes, the unit will still be available to the participant upon discharge from the treatment program, the participant is required to continue paying the tenant rent to owner and any cost of utilities required under the lease during the absence from the assisted unit.

48. What are the criminal backgrounds that would disqualify a youth from this program?

DCA will deny admission of an applicant for three (3) years if any household member was evicted from federally assisted housing for drug related criminal activity. The 3 years begin on the date of eviction. DCA will deny admission if any household member is currently engaging in illegal use of a drug. Such use or possession must have occurred within five (5) years before the date that the program provides notice to the household of the determination to deny admission. Admission will be denied to an applicant if the program has reasonable cause to believe that a household member's illegal drug use or pattern of illegal drug use may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents. If an applicant has ever been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for manufacturing or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing they will be denied admission to the program. Lastly, DCA will deny admission of an applicant if any member is subject to a lifetime registration as a sex offender under a state registration program, is currently engaged in, or has engaged in during the time before admission, drug related criminal activity, violent criminal activity or other criminal activity that would have a negative impact on other residents or persons residing in the immediate vicinity.

49. Do startup expenses include furniture? Does this furniture belong to the agency or the youth tenant?

Startup expenses can include furniture. If furniture is purchased for the young adult, they own the furniture.

50. Is there a preference for the agency to provide one bedroom units, or can the agency provide units with more than one bedroom?

DCF recommends at minimum one bedroom units. The agency needs to take into consideration the circumstances and number of individuals per unit where a more than one bedroom unit will be funded by DCA.

51. If a youth tenant is evicted do they lose their voucher? If so, then what will happen?

Yes, as specified by DCA program regulations. The participant will receive written notification informing them that they have the right to an informal hearing to determine their continued assistance.

52. Should the agency still provide services to an evicted youth? Should the agency still actively attempt to assist the youth in finding other housing?

The agency may continue to provide services to an evicted youth if the agency has the capacity. It is DCF's expectation that the agency would at minimum actively attempt to assist the youth in finding other housing.

53. If the youth takes their voucher with them, how long will it take for the voucher to be replaced? Will the agency always have 20 vouchers for the duration of the project?

The time it would take to fill the voucher varies it depends on how quickly the provider agency submits an application to the field office for approval, hopefully the applicant will pass DCA background check, and if they are compliant in getting their paperwork in to the field office. Yes DCF will always have for the duration of the project.

54. What happens if the project which is projected to last fifteen years, does not last that long? Would the agency still keep the vouchers?

DCA will continue to honor the project-based contract as long as the landlord complies with the terms, which would include renting to the target population.

55. Who does the agency pay rent to? If the agency has a master lease, who does DCA send their check to, the agency or the landlord?

The agency would be responsible for paying rent to the owner and collecting the participants' portion of rent, DCA would make its payment to the agency directly.

56. 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.

57. Please provide more information regarding the information on page 24 of the RFP, "describe the agency's knowledge of and ability to effectively collaborate with other local community resources and agencies."

Awarded agencies are required to be willing to develop and strengthen necessary community collaborations and to be knowledgeable and informed of local housing options and resources. For example, partnerships with local housing authorities, membership on local homelessness committees, and/or participation in the county Continuum of Care.