



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROVISION OF FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES FOR CHILD-WELFARE INVOLVED FAMILIES

Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W.
Commissioner

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The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is seeking information and comment on models and approaches of Family Preservation Services (FPS) to prevent out of home placements while keeping children safe and strengthening families. DCF is seeking responses and comment from private or public not-for-profit or for-profit organizations, university partners and faculty members, and other relevant stakeholders.

This RFI is asking interested organizations for information about their understanding of, and capacity to implement, the Homebuilders® model of Family Preservation Services or other evidence supported models of FPS in order to assist DCF with program planning for its Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P).

All responses to this RFI are due by 5:00 PM EST on or before August 31, 2016. Responses shall be accepted on a rolling basis. Responses may provide a basis for DCF to develop future Requests for Proposals (RFP) for FPS. The Department is seeking brief and concise answers to each of the questions listed below in Section B. We have attached a form for you to provide or you may put the responses in a form that you choose. We ask that you, as our partner, not contact the Department directly, in person, or by telephone, concerning this RFI. Your responses are public information and we hope to design a Request for Proposal with your input. You may request information and/or assistance from DCFASKRFP@dcf.state.nj.us Responses received after 5:00 PM EST on August 31, 2016 may not be considered in our current planning process.

A. BACKGROUND

The removal of children from their homes can have devastating effects across multiple domains of functioning including physical health, cognitive and academic functioning and social-emotional well-being. While substitute care provides necessary safety and support for some children, there is generally agreement that children fare better in their own homes with appropriate supportive services as needed.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 played pivotal role in shaping New Jersey's the implementation and ongoing provision of family preservation and reunification services. The Act required child welfare systems to demonstrate diligent efforts to prevent entry of children into foster care, specified timeframes for reunification of children in placement and reauthorized funding for family preservation services and family support services.

For decades, child welfare systems have turned to FPS as a means to reduce the out-of-home placement of children and support in-home stabilization. The approach utilizes intensive, in-home crisis intervention and family education, and is intended to serve families with children at imminent risk of removal as well as families who require intensive in-home services to support imminent reunification of children. DCF currently contracts with 13 providers to serve 21 counties with FPS. The annual report is available:

http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/dcfreportsnewsletters/FY15_FPS%20Annual%20Report.pdf

A key pillar of the Department's strategic plan is to ensure the integrity and quality of DCF's system of care, with priority placed on transitioning the service array to evidence supported programming. Over time, the Department seeks to have clearly defined models of core CP&P services, including FPS, coupled with appropriate implementation support and ongoing evaluation. DCF is cognizant that in order to adopt and implement evidence supported programming with fidelity, providers require ongoing technical assistance and other implementation supports. With this in mind, DCF is exploring ways to strengthen FPS service provision, which was originally based on the Homebuilders® model described below:

Homebuilders® is a home- and community-based intensive family preservation services treatment program designed to avoid unnecessary placement of children and youth into foster care, group care, psychiatric hospitals, or juvenile justice facilities. The program model engages families by delivering services in their natural environment, at times when they are most receptive to learning, and by enlisting them as partners in assessment, goal setting, and treatment planning. Reunification cases often require case activities related to reintegrating the child into the home and community. Examples include helping the parent find childcare, enrolling the child in school, refurbishing the child's bedroom, and helping the child connect with clubs, sports or other community groups. Child neglect referrals often require case activities related to improving the physical condition of the home, improving supervision of children, decreasing parental depression and/or alcohol and substance abuse, and helping families access needed community supports.

Key Program Elements¹:

- Intervention at the crisis point: Professional therapists reach families when the families are in crisis. Client families are seen within 24 hours of referral.
- Treatment in the natural setting: Almost all services take place in the client's home or the community where the problems are occurring and, ultimately, where they need to be resolved.
- Accessibility and responsiveness: Therapists are on call to their clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Families are given as much time as they need, when they need it. This accessibility also allows close monitoring of potentially dangerous situations.
- Intensity: Services are time-limited and concentrated in a period targeted at 4 weeks. The service is designed to resolve the immediate crisis, and teach the skills necessary for the family to remain together. Each family receives an average of 40 to 50 hours of direct service.
- Low caseloads: Therapists carry only 2 to 3 cases at a time. This enables them to be accessible and provide intensive services. Low caseloads also allow therapists the time to work on specific psycho-educational interventions, as well as the basic hard service needs of the family. While therapists see the same total number of families per year as therapists in many traditional programs, the services are concentrated to take advantage of the time when families are experiencing the most pain, and have the most motivation to change.
- Research-based interventions: Therapists utilize a range of research-based interventions, including crisis intervention, motivational interviewing, parent education, skill building, and cognitive/behavioral therapy.
- Flexibility: Services are provided when and where the clients wish. Therapists provide a wide range of services, from helping clients meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, to the most sophisticated therapeutic techniques. Therapists teach families basic skills such as using public transportation systems, budgeting, and where necessary, dealing with the social services system. They also educate families in areas more commonly associated with counseling, such as child development, parenting skills, anger management, other mood management skills, communications, and assertiveness.

For additional information about the Homebuilders® model, please consult the Institute for Family Development's website: http://www.institutefamily.org/programs_IFPS.asp.

^{1 1} Institute for Family Development website. Retrieved on June 20, 2016
http://www.institutefamily.org/programs_IFPS.asp

B. QUESTIONS

In response to this RFI, DCF asks for the following input:

FPS Model Recommendations:

FPS Model recommendations- If a model or approach other than Homebuilders® is recommended please provide a description of the program and how it is evidence supported (or provide appropriate citations). Please be sure to include professional qualifications, including training and educational requirements, necessary to deliver/administer proposed intervention or program.

Capacity to implement FPS:

Discuss the organization's understanding of, and ability to implement and sustain the FPS model (Homebuilders® or alternative). Include the following components:

- Implementation supports required by model developer to execute the key elements of the model with fidelity; include a discussion of staff development (hiring, training and supervision supports), organizational development and infrastructure needed.
- Total cost for organization to implement the model including implementation supports listed above.
- Strategy for sustaining adherence to the proposed model.
- Potential challenges and ways the organization and/or DCF can mitigate them.

C. METHODOLOGY FOR SUBMITTING RESPONSES

All responses to this RFI are due by 5:00PM EST on or before August 31, 2016. Please submit responses to DCFASKRFP@dcf.state.nj.us. In email subject line please enter: RFI FPS.

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