



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROVISION OF HOUSING INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILD-WELFARE INVOLVED FAMILIES

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

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The Department of Children and Families (DCF) seeks information from the housing community including Public Housing Authorities (PHA), Continuums of Care, affordable housing developers, as well as social service and community based agencies, and other public/private agencies regarding the availability of housing subsidies that might be leveraged to provide housing interventions for child welfare involved families.

This RFI is asking interested organizations for information about the availability and type of housing subsidies they have access to in order to assist DCF with program planning. Only organizations with access to housing subsidies or a plan for accessing subsidies should consider responding.

All responses to this RFI are due by 5:00 PM EST on or before Monday, September 15, 2014. Responses shall be accepted on a rolling basis. Responses may provide a basis for DCF to develop Requests for Proposals (RFP) for supportive housing models or other housing interventions. The Department is seeking brief and concise answers to each of the questions listed below. Applicants shall not contact the Department directly, in person, or by telephone, concerning this RFI. Applicants may request information and/or assistance from DCFASKRFP@dcf.state.nj.us

Responses received after 5:00 PM EST on September 15, 2014 may not be considered in our current planning process but can be submitted at any time.

Introduction:

Family homelessness combined with other challenges such as mental health and parental substance use disorders have devastating effects on children, including high rates of family dissolution in the short-term. In the long-term, research shows that these challenges and poor outcomes tend to occur across generations. National research shows that, absent comprehensive interventions, these families often confront out-of-home placements for their children, family dissolution, ongoing substance abuse and

mental health disorders, intergenerational poverty, and long-term homelessness. Housing instability is an added burden for child welfare involved families and a traumatic experience for their children.

Unfortunately for many families who are already struggling, housing is expensive in New Jersey and housing assistance is a limited resource that can be hard to access. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), New Jersey has the fifth most expensive housing wage for a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent (FMR). NLIHC defines housing wage as, “the estimated full-time hourly wage a household must earn to afford a decent rental unit at HUD estimated Fair Market Rent while spending no more than 30% of their income on housing costs.” A two-bedroom apartment at FMR in New Jersey costs \$1,296, which translates to a housing wage of \$24.92. New Jersey trails only Hawaii, the District of Columbia, California, and Maryland on the list of highest housing wages. With a minimum wage of \$8.25 in New Jersey, a person earning minimum wage would need to work 121 hours per week for all 52 weeks of the year to pay for this FMR bedroom. In other words, at 40 hours a week, a household would need at least 3 minimum wage earners.

With such expensive housing rates, it is no surprise that homelessness is an issue in New Jersey. Based on a Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) 2013 Point in Time Count (PITC), 11,818 homeless men, women, and children were recorded in the State. Using their statistical formula, CSH estimated that 25,612 persons were homeless in New Jersey over the course of that year. Of the persons counted in the survey, there were 1,988 homeless families, who were either unsheltered or residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or in hotel/motels. These families included 3,816 children, of which 58% were 6 years old or younger, and nearly 80% were female-headed. By self-reports, they suffered from a number of challenges including mental health (24.5%), domestic violence (19.2%), and substance abuse (9.6%). When asked what their needs were in that moment, the top three answers were housing, employment assistance, and educational training.

Child welfare-involved families in New Jersey suffer from housing instability and homelessness as well as numerous co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence. Each of these challenges presents ample opportunity for individuals and families to be exposed to and impacted by trauma. In order to fully address the complex needs of families with recurring child-welfare-involvement and co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders, a longer-term comprehensive model (i.e. supportive housing) is needed.

Strong federal support exists for the development of housing interventions for families involved in the child welfare system. A letter recently released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) states that “inadequate housing contributes to the removal of 22,000 children from their families every year,” and highlights the critical need for collaboration among Federal agencies, child welfare agencies, and public housing authorities to meet families’ housing and service needs. As a means of developing promising practices in

this arena, the U.S. DHHS and Administration for Children and Families (ACYF) funded five sites across the country in 2012 through a competitive grant process for the purpose of testing how well supportive housing can stabilize highly vulnerable, child-welfare involved families. The initiative is based on a permanent, supportive housing pilot known as Keeping Families Together (KFT). KFT was implemented by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation from 2007-2010 in New York City. KFT, a Housing First model, successfully paired supportive housing with on-site case management and a comprehensive array of services for families experiencing chronic homelessness, substance abuse and mental health problems, and child-welfare involvement.

DCF has continued to move forward in assessing its own need for housing services as part of our services array and introducing new housing intervention services. DCF in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) recently released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to support the development of a KFT pilot program in Essex County. This effort utilizes a combination of DCF service funds and DHS housing subsidies, and will support 10 families. DCF is interested in expanding this programming in other areas of the State. Accordingly, DCF is seeking additional information on available housing resources that might be available to be combined with DCF service dollars to support additional KFT-like programming.

Information about your organization:

Please provide DCF with information about your organization's:

- Mission and/or role in the community and the services you provide;
- Existing partnership(s) you have with DCF; and,
- Supportive housing services if applicable.

Information about access to housing subsidies:

Please provide DCF with information about the number and type of housing subsidies your organization has access to.

- What type of housing subsidies does your organization have access to? Please specify the type of subsidy (i.e., S-WRAP, FUP, S+C, SHP, etc.).
- What parameters related to eligibility surround your available housing subsidies?
- What number of housing subsidies do you currently have or expect to have over the next 12-24 months? How many of these are currently available or expected to be available within the next 12-24 months to support families?
- Does your organization provide housing location assistance to help families find housing once they receive a housing subsidy? Is this search limited to a geographic region, and if so, what region?

Or

If your community or agency was interested in providing these vouchers as part of an intervention to support child welfare involved families, how would you go about obtaining them, and from what resources/programs would they come (e.g. the local Continuum of Care)?

Methodology for Submitting Responses:

Responses must be signed and dated by the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent. Applicants should submit one (1) original of the response in one of the following ways:

A. In person:

Catherine Schafer, Director of Grants Management, Auditing and Records
Department of Children and Families
50 East State Street 3rd Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Please allow time for the elevator and access through the security guard. Applicants submitting proposals in person or by commercial carrier should submit **one (1) signed original** and **one CD ROM** with all documents including a signed cover letter of transmittal.

B. Commercial Carrier (hand delivery, federal express or UPS) to:

Catherine Schafer, Director of Grants Management, Auditing and Records
Department of Children and Families
50 East State Street 3rd Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Applicants submitting proposals in person or by commercial carrier should submit **one (1) signed original** and **one CD ROM** with all documents including a signed cover letter of transmittal.

C. Online- <https://ftpw.dhs.state.nj.us>:

DCF offers the alternative to submit proposals electronically to the web address above. Online training is available on our website at: www.nj.gov/dcf/notices/

We recommend that you do not wait until the date of delivery in case there are technical difficulties during your submission. Only a registered Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) or the designated alternate is eligible to send in a submission. Registration forms are available on our website. Registered AOR forms must be received 5 business days prior to the date the bid is due. You need to register only if you are submitting a response to this RFI online.

Questions can be addressed to DCFASKRFP@dcf.state.nj.us. Please include the title of this RFI so that your question can be properly addressed.