

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Keeping Families Together Program in Hudson AND Middlesex Counties

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SPECIAL NOTES DISCUSSED AT THE BIDDERS CONFERENCE:

- The timeframe for when housing units must be ready for leasing – as described on pages 4, 7, 15, 22, and 31 of the RFP – has been modified as follows: **Housing units must be ready for leasing within 90 days following the award at approximately 150 days after the contract is finalized.**
- Additional information on the Keeping Families Together model, the federal demonstration (*Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families with Child Welfare Involvement*), and the national evaluation of the federal demonstration sites being conducted by the Urban Institute can be found at:

Corporation for Supportive Housing: <http://www.csh.org/csh-solutions/serve-vulnerable-populations/families/>

Center for the Study of Social Policy: <http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/child-welfare-and-supportive-housing-resource-center>

Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org/>

- The deadline for questions was extended until midnight on March 30, 2017.

- 1. Once a family is identified they are required to submit a Project-Based Housing Choice Voucher application to DCA for review and approval. How long will the turnaround be?**

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) approval process is contingent upon the completeness of the application submitted. If all necessary components of the application are properly completed, DCA should be able to complete its review in 10 to 15 business days. If the application is approved, it will be sent to the local DCA field office. The field office will schedule a meeting with the applicant and will need to inspect the identified unit prior to a lease signing. This entire process can take anywhere from 4 to 12 weeks.

- 2. This project based housing choice voucher contains a mobility unit. If the tenant relocates do they have to remain in Middlesex and are they still under the case management provided by the grantee? Please clarify the mobility component.**

The mobility component is intended to support families who need a housing voucher but no longer need case management and supportive services, as determined by the family and the awarded Keeping Families Together (KFT) provider. In this case, families who receive a tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher must relocate from the unit and are able to move anywhere in the United States. It is expected that the grantee would support the family in their transition out of the program and into a new unit.

It is important to note that this mobility component is contingent upon voucher availability. Tenants who have maintained their project-based Housing Choice Voucher for at least one year and are in good standing may be eligible for a tenant-based voucher to move on from the program, if a tenant-based voucher is available. The project-based Housing Choice Voucher would remain with the unit. This would assist the family in affording housing on their own, and make the program unit available to another family who needs services.

- 3. Can housing units be available for the population of this grant in another city other than Hudson County [referring specifically to the Hudson County RFP]?**

As per page 15 in the Hudson RFP:

“E. Applicant Eligibility Requirements:

1. Applicants must have a concrete plan to access 25 units of affordable housing within Hudson County for a 15-year period.”

4. Who actually submits the application for approval once the families have been identified?

It is anticipated that the awarded KFT provider will submit families’ applications for project-based Housing Choice Vouchers to DCA.

5. Are one bedroom units permitted for mothers with one infant/young child?

Yes, one bedroom units are permitted. DCF anticipates many referred families will need 2 and 3-bedroom units. However, in our experience, there are also numerous situations in which smaller 1-bedroom units (e.g., single parent with infant or young child) and larger 4-bedroom units (e.g., large family size) are warranted.

6. Is there a list of agencies that may be willing to collaborate?

No.

7. Is the proposal only open to Not-for profits?

As per page 15 in the RFP:

“E. Applicant Eligibility Requirements:

2. Applicants must be universities (State or private) or not-for-profit corporations that are duly registered to conduct business within the State of New Jersey.”

8. Can the same organization put in a bid for both?

Yes. The organization must submit a separate application for each RFP.

9. Would you consider giving both to the same organization?

Yes.

10. Can we find out how many organizations are interested in bidding for each county?

No. We will not have that information until the RFP due date.

11. Will a list of everyone who attended the Bidders Conference be posted or made available?

No. Interested participants were encouraged to review sign-in sheets at the bidder's conference prior to leaving.

12. At what point will DCA pay the landlord?

Payment will be made once the following are completed: the unit has passed inspection by DCA, the family has signed a DCA approved lease, and an executed housing assistance payment (HAP) contract is in place. Payment will be scheduled for release on the first of the month following the completion of the three items noted above.

13. Do you anticipate any barriers for families during the application process for these housing units?

Per page 8 of the RFP, "The provider will assist all families in completing housing-related applications, which may include income verification, criminal background and/or credit checks, and the provision of any other documentation as required." Potential challenges during the application process may include but are not limited to missing documentation (e.g., birth certificates, social security cards, etc.), incomplete applications, and/or criminal charges. It is expected that the awarded KFT provider will work closely with the family and CP&P to support the application process, including assistance with completing application forms, gathering all required documentation, and preparing letters of support regarding criminal or credit histories.

14. Do you have a list of recommended landlords?

No. The New Jersey Housing Resource Center may be a helpful resource in identifying potential property owners/landlords and can be found at: <http://www.njhrc.gov/>.

15. Is there a preference for scattered rental units or single site (congregate) units?

No. There are benefits to both single site and scattered site programs. Applicants should consider their program model as it relates to being single site or scattered site. Applicants should also focus on identifying high quality, safe housing with accessible community resources. Applicants should consider the location, accessibility and transportation, in addition to safety, schools, grocery stores and other community resources.

16. The RFP asks applicants to discuss the role of consumer choice. Does the family have any choice in the selection of the rental unit?

Given that we are utilizing Project-Based vouchers, applicants must identify units in advance. Depending on the approach taken (single vs. scattered site) and the availability of vacant units, this may limit the amount of choice families will have in selecting their housing unit. The awarded KFT provider should work to place each family in the unit and community of best fit based on their network of support and access to community resources.

17. If CP&P has referred a family to the KFT program, and the family does not want to move into any of the available housing units, will CP&P then move on to the next family on the list?

Yes.

18. If a family leaves the program, does the agency still have 25 vouchers?

Yes.

19. Will the funding available for client assistance (up to \$145,000) be renewed annually?

It is anticipated that some amount of client assistance funding will be provided as part of continuation funding. Per page 14 of the RFP, "Funding is subject to approval of the Appropriations Act, and continuation funding is contingent upon the availability of funds in future fiscal years and the grantee's performance under the provisions of this RFP and the resulting Contract. However, it is anticipated that the funding available for

specific client assistance will adjust from year to year based on program need.”

20. Is the expectation that the housing units are to be ready approximately 150 days after the award is made or approximately 150 days after the contract is finalized?

Housing units must be ready for leasing at approximately 150 days after the contract is finalized.

21. What agencies are currently providing KFT services?

Our current contracted KFT providers are Family Connections, Robins’ Nest, 180 Turning Lives Around, and Center for Family Services.

22. In the RFP it states that agencies are expected to demonstrate partnerships. Does that mean you are requiring a letter from Continuum of Care (COC)?

No. A letter from COC is not required.

23. On page 4 of the Middlesex County RFP, it says that DCF currently has a KFT program in Middlesex County. Is this correct?

No, this is a mistake. The corrected language is as follows: “DCF currently has KFT programs in Atlantic, Camden, Essex, Gloucester, ~~Middlesex~~ Hudson, Monmouth, and Passaic Counties.

24. Can you submit a proposal for a portion of the 25 units, or do you need to have all 25 units to apply?

Applicants must submit a proposal for all 25 units. Per page 15 of the RFP:

“E. Applicant Eligibility Requirements:

1. Applicants must have a concrete plan to access 25 units of affordable housing within Hudson County for a 15-year period.”

25. What if a family no longer engages in services after 1 year? Does the caseload drop to 24 families?

No. If the family is still in need of supportive services, it is expected that the awarded KFT provider will continue to engage them and encourage their participation in services. Per page 5 of the RFP, “Though services are voluntary, the expectation is that case managers and provider staff will be successful at engaging clients and supporting their participation in recommended programs, and applicants shall outline what practices and strategies will be employed to engage and motivate clients.”

If it is determined by the family and the awarded KFT provider that the family no longer needs case management and supportive services, they should assess whether the family is eligible for a tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher and whether a voucher is available. If the family is able to move on from the program using a tenant-based voucher, the project-based Housing Choice Voucher would remain with the unit, and a new family would be referred for this unit.

26. If a family stabilizes and their CP&P case closes, does the funding continue for all 25 families?

Yes. A family’s CP&P case does not need to remain open for them to continue their participation in the KFT program. While it is anticipated that a family’s case will not close immediately upon enrollment into the program, it is expected that families will continue to engage in KFT programming after CP&P case closure.

27. If a family stabilizes and no longer needs supportive services, do they stay put in the program or move on?

If it is determined by the family and the awarded KFT provider that the family no longer needs case management and supportive services, they shall assess whether the family is eligible for a tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher per the mobility component and whether a tenant-based voucher is available through DCA. This would assist the family in affording housing on their own, and make the program unit available to another family who needs services.

28. If a family is ready to move on using the mobility component, do they have to apply for a tenant-based voucher, and how long does that application process take?

The family should notify DCA and their landlord of their intent to move in advance of their lease renewal. Typically, tenants are required to give at least 60 days' notice to their landlord if they will not be renewing their lease. If the family is in good standing with the Housing Choice Voucher program and a tenant-based voucher is available, they will be granted a voucher to seek a unit. Upon giving notification, transferring to a new unit will take most families between 60-90 days.

29. When the family moves out, do they take the security deposit with them?

Yes. The lease must be in the family's name (i.e., the tenant), and the landlord must return the collected security deposit and interest to the tenant in accordance with New Jersey's Rent Security Deposit Act (N.J.S.A. 46:8-21.1).

30. If a family wants to leave the program and refuses services, do they still get their security deposit back?

Yes. The landlord must return the collected security deposit and interest to the tenant in accordance with New Jersey's Rent Security Deposit Act (N.J.S.A. 46:8-21.1).

31. When is the awarded KFT provider expected to begin engaging with the family? Do they attend the family's initial meeting with DCA?

Once a family is referred to KFT, the awarded provider shall conduct an enrollment or intake meeting with the family to educate them on the program and housing voucher. If a family is interested in participating in the program, the KFT provider is expected to begin engaging with the family immediately and provide hands-on coordination and support as the family completes all housing-related applications and activities. This includes attending the initial meeting at the DCA field office and any meetings with the landlord the family might have.

32. Are there any reasons why applicants would be excluded from this program?

There are two exclusionary criteria that will cause a family to be automatically denied housing. Per the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan, DCA will deny admission of an applicant if: any household member is subject to a lifetime registration as a sex

offender under a state registration program AND/OR any household member has ever been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for manufacturing or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing.

DCA will also screen for drug abuse and other criminal activity, including violent or drug-related criminal activity within the previous 3 years. If a client is denied due to violent or drug-related criminal charges, DCA will allow opportunity to respond and appeal the decision. The awarded KFT provider and CP&P will be expected to support clients during any such appeals processes, including preparing a letter of support describing their criminal charges and any services they've since engaged in or completed.

33. Will there be a liaison at DCA for the awarded provider to work with?

It is anticipated that there will be a single point of contact at DCA for submission of project-based Housing Choice Voucher applications. Once an application is approved, the family will be assigned to the appropriate DCA Field Office, where a liaison will be established to assist the family moving forward.

34. What are the unit sizes and the sizes of families in the existing KFT programs?

The existing KFT programs include a mix of 1, 2, 3, and 4-bedroom units. Similarly, there is also a range of household sizes for families enrolled in KFT. Thus far, we've had single and two parent households with anywhere from one to eight children.

35. What happens if a family requires more or less bedrooms than are available at that time?

Once a family's project-based Housing Choice Voucher application has been approved, DCA issues a voucher to the family based upon the household size and composition. A family's household size and the size of available units should be taken into consideration during case conferencing between CP&P and the awarded KFT provider and prior to referring a family to the program.

If a family is approved for a voucher size smaller than what's available among the project's units, DCF and DCA would discourage the family from moving into a larger unit. For example, if a family is approved for a 1-bedroom unit, but only a 2-bedroom unit is available, DCA will only pay the

gross rent for a 1-bedroom unit. The family would be responsible for paying 30% of their adjusted gross income towards rent as well as any additional rent associated with a higher rate for the 2 bedroom unit, and this is generally not feasible among the families being served. Units must be affordable (i.e., tenants do not pay more than 30% of their income towards rent).

If a family is approved for a voucher size larger than what's available among the project's units, DCA generally does not prohibit a family from renting a unit with fewer bedrooms than the number stated. For example, if a family is approved for a 3 bedroom unit but only a 2-bedroom unit is available, the family may opt to move into the 2-bedroom unit, if this does not create "overcrowding" of the unit; DCA will only pay the gross rent for a 2-bedroom unit.

Additional information on DCA occupancy standards, "overcrowding," and the determination of voucher size can be found within the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan. The current Administrative Plan is posted online at: <http://nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/publications/>.

36. If a mother and her son are initially approved for a 1-bedroom voucher because the son is 5 years old, what happens when the son turns 8 or 9? Would the family then be eligible to move into a 2 bedroom apartment?

The family must go through an annual recertification process for their Housing Choice Voucher. Their household size and composition will be taken into account, and it is anticipated that an increased voucher size will be approved once the son reaches the age of 10.

37. Where can we find a schedule of DCA's gross rental payment standards?

The DCA Payment Standards for 2017 will be posted online to the DCF public notices website at: <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/notices/>.

38. In the RFP, it states that the voucher can only be used for rent and not for utilities. Can you clarify?

Although the Payment Standards set by DCA for Housing Choice Voucher account for gross tenant housing cost, the voucher cannot be used to pay for utilities. A utility allowance schedule established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is used to

estimate the cost of utilities to be paid by the tenant, and this amount plus the rent equals the gross tenant housing cost. If a family is responsible for paying one or more utilities, the amount of the estimated utility allowance, as determined by DCA, will be subtracted from the family's required portion of the rent (i.e., 30% of their adjusted gross household income).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with property owners who are willing to include all utilities in the monthly rental rate.

39. If someone owns an agency and owns rental housing units, can that person apply for this grant?

Per page 4 of the RFP, "Applicants who do not currently own the proposed housing units must attach a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the current owner."

Additional information regarding applicant eligibility requirements can be found on page 15.

40. Are awarded providers required to enter these families in HMIS?

No. This is not currently a requirement.

41. Will the awarded agency have access to funding in order to hire staff prior to receiving family referrals?

Yes.

42. Is there a cap for general and administrative (G&A) costs?

No. Proposed general and administrative costs must be reasonable.

43. Are there start-up funds included in this RFP?

No. Per page 14 of the RFP, "Additional start-up funds are not available. Reasonable operational start-up costs (one-time) are permitted, and all start-up costs (one-time) must be funded with accruals. Applicants must provide a justification and detailed summary of anticipated start-up costs in order to begin program operations."

44. Is there a cap on the accrual percentage?

No.

45. Is there a cap on the number of landlords an agency can propose to partner with to secure 25 units?

No.

46. Are there any requirements for a property owner or landlord?

Per page 4 of the RFP, "Applicants who do not currently own the proposed housing units must attach a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the current owner." Therefore, applicants must partner directly with the owner of the housing unit(s), and the partner must be able to show proof of ownership.

Per page 7 of the RFP, "The housing units must meet HUD Housing Quality Standards as set forth in 24 CFR 982.401 and must comply with Housing Choice Voucher rules as set forth in 24 CFR and the DCA Administrative Plan. Please note that no more than twenty-five (25) percent of the units in a building may have project-based assistance from any Federal project-based housing assistance." Properties with 4 or less units are exempt from the 25% restriction.

Lastly, any identified property owners or landlords are strongly encouraged to follow all requirements set forth by the township in which the unit is located, such as obtaining a valid certificate of occupancy (CO).

47. Are applicants required to submit their budget on the DCF Annex B (budget) form?

Yes.

48. Will families be required to sign any kind of agreement with DCF regarding their participation in the program?

No.

49. Are payments of the subsidy provided as long as a unit is available for family use?

No. DCA will only pay rent on housing units, which are occupied, meet HUD Housing Quality Standards as set forth in 24 CFR 982.401, and comply with Housing Choice Voucher rules as set forth in 24 CFR and the DCA Administrative Plan.

50. Are payments provided if DCF has months when they don't have a family to refer to the unit?

No. DCA will only pay rent on occupied housing units. If a unit is vacant or anticipated to be vacant, DCF will work with the appropriate CP&P Local Offices and awarded KFT provider to quickly identify a new family for the unit.

51. Is there a minimum number of bedrooms required to have the unit eligible for payment?

Information on Project-Based Housing Choice Vouchers including rules and restrictions can be found in the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan or Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR). The current DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan is posted online at: <http://nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/publications/>.

As this program is designed to serve families, successful applicants will identify units with at least 1 bedroom and will not include studio apartments in the mix of proposed units.

52. What are the subsidy payment amounts for each bedroom size?

The DCA Payment Standards for 2017 will be posted online to the DCF public notices website at: <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/notices/>.

53. If families are disruptive and interfere with the quiet enjoyment of other tenants in the property what are the options for the landlord to address the issue?

Families must have leases and are subject to the terms of the lease. Under any lease, whether written or spoken, a tenant cannot interfere with the rights of other tenants. That means the family, their guests, and pets

cannot act in ways that disturb the peace and quiet of other tenants and neighbors. Under the Anti-Eviction Act, the tenant can be evicted for being disorderly, making too much noise, and disturbing other tenants. The awarded KFT provider is expected to maintain ongoing communication with the landlord or property management staff and serve as a liaison to them in these situations, doing their best to communicate and rectify issues with the family to avoid eviction.

54. If there is a no pet policy in the building must the family comply with the rules?

Yes.

55. Can the landlord find a family to reunite and place them in the unit and maintain the subsidy?

No. At this time, referrals for this program must come from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' Division of Child Protection and Permanency. If the awarded KFT provider is currently engaged with a CP&P-involved family who appears to meet the indicators of need, the provider may also present and conference the case with CP&P.

56. What situation would cause the subsidy not being paid for a unit if the landlord kept the unit available for the program?

DCA will only pay rent on housing units which are occupied, meet HUD Housing Quality Standards as set forth in 24 CFR 982.401, and comply with Housing Choice Voucher rules as set forth in 24 CFR and the DCA Administrative Plan. If one or more of these conditions is not met, DCA would not paid rent for the unit. In addition, the subsidy will not be paid if it is determined that the family's portion of rent results in a housing assistance payment equal to zero due to an increase in household income.

57. If this a project based subsidy, is the subsidy guaranteed to be there every month regardless of any situation as long as the unit is habitable and can pass inspection?

No. DCA will only pay rent on occupied housing units. In addition, the subsidy will not be paid if it is determined that the family's portion of rent results in a housing assistance payment equal to zero due to an increase in household income.