

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

**DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION
SERVICES**

REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST

**Capacity Building for Current Lifeline
Contact Centers
(in preparation for 988)**

April 1, 2022

Valerie L. Mielke, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Background:

On July 16, 2022, the new 3-digit dialing code for mental health crisis and suicide prevention will be launched. On that date, 988 will replace the current 10-digit number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In calendar year 2020, the Lifeline network received over 55,000 calls from New Jersey residents. Based on nationally established projections, New Jersey is estimated to experience a 30-50% increase in call volume during the first year of 988. The five (5) current Lifeline contact/member centers must be ready for this rapid expansion of requests from individuals in crisis.

Available Resources:

The focus of this Request for Letters of Interest (this RLI) is to provide funds for staffing and response structure to the five (5) current NJ Lifeline member centers so they can respond to at least 90% of Lifeline calls originating from New Jersey by June 15, 2022.

Total funding available through this RLI is \$3,700,000, based on funding availability.

Within this initiative, up to five (5) awards will be available, one (1) to each of the five (5) current NJ Lifeline member centers as detailed in this solicitation. This RLI offers one-time funding to cover a two (2) year period, ending on April 30, 2024.

Required Call Volume Capacity	Basic “up to” budget (without incentive increases)	Capacity to respond to chats (2% increase for ‘yes’ response)	Capacity to respond to texts (2% increase for ‘yes’ response)	Capacity to respond to calls, chats and texts in Spanish without translator, (2% increase for ‘yes’ response)	Potential “up to” budget (including all incentive increases)
Respond to a minimum of 1,000 calls per year	\$87,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	\$92,750
Respond to a minimum of 6,000 calls per year	\$437,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	\$463,750
Respond to a minimum of 40,000 calls per year	\$1,050,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	\$1,113,000

Successful awardees will recruit, hire and train contact center staff to answer calls (and possibly chats and/or texts) for the 988 (Lifeline) system no later than June 15, 2022. The funding for this RLI is specifically dedicated to the addition of staff qualified to answer calls and make follow-up contacts related to mental health crisis and suicide prevention. As funding levels are based on

response to call volume, a Lifeline center can increase its call volume by providing primary coverage to one or more additional counties. Requests for items to improve an agency's response structure will be considered if they are specific to the provision of 988 services.

Requirements to Apply:

To be considered for this opportunity, eligible providers must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must be a current NJ Lifeline member center;
- The applicant must be in good standing with the State of New Jersey (if applicant is a contracted agency);
- The applicant must be able to clearly demonstrate the need for the proposed staff and/or technology through call center data from the last 6-12 months;
- For an applicant that has a contract with DMHAS in place when this RLI is issued, that bidder must have all outstanding Plans of Correction (PoC) for deficiencies submitted to DMHAS for approval prior to proposal submission;
- The applicant must be fiscally viable based upon an assessment of the bidder's audited financial statements. If a bidder is determined, in DMHAS' sole discretion, to be insolvent or to present insolvency within the twelve (12) months after bid submission, DMHAS will deem the proposal ineligible for contract award;
- The applicant must not appear on the State of New Jersey Consolidated Debarment Report at <http://www.nj.gov/treasury/revenue/debarment/debarsearch.shtml> or be suspended or debarred by any other State or Federal entity from receiving funds;
- The applicant shall not employ a member of the Board of Directors as an employee or in a consultant capacity;
- Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-44, a for-profit applicant and each proposed subcontractor must have a valid Business Registration Certificate on file with the Division of Revenue. This statutory requirement does not apply to non-profit organizations, private colleges and universities, or state and municipal agencies; and
- The applicant must attend a mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting (see details below). An overview of the RLI will be provided and questions will be answered at that time. After the Bidders Conference ends, no further questions will be answered regarding this funding opportunity.

Additional Requirements:

988 follow-up include the following:

- All callers/chat visitors/texters that confirm current suicidal ideation (at the time of the call or within the past 24 hours) during their interaction with the Lifeline will be asked for consent to follow-up services.
- Callers/chat visitors/texters must consent to follow-up services.
- The Lifeline has a recommended consent form, centers can adapt their own, but it should include all elements on the recommended form.
- Telephone follow-up is the only current modality that can be offered through the Lifeline, but we are exploring other options that may offer some future technological aids, like outbound texting or messaging.
- First contact should typically occur within 24 - 72 hours after the original contact with the Lifeline. (Note: contacts needed sooner than 24 hours are often done as part of a safety check outreach call and are particularly helpful for those who need additional support and do not want/need to go to an ER. People who receive safety check calls can also be asked for consent to participate in a follow-up program once the period of immediate safety is no longer a concern).

- Individuals who have consented to follow-up should receive a minimum of 2 follow-up contacts.
- At least three attempts should be made to make contact with the individual if the individual is not reached for a scheduled conversation.
- At a minimum in each follow-up contact: Assess the individual's current well-being and suicide risk, review and update safety plan as needed, coordinate care with other providers, and increase connection to needed services.

Please note that these requirements are not final and may be subject to change.

Application Submission Instructions:

Posting Date: April 1, 2022

Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting: April 6, 2022

Due Date: Responses to this RLI are due by 4:00 PM on April 20, 2022

Notification Date: All applicants will be notified on or before May 6, 2022

Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting:

An applicant intending to submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) in response to this RLI must attend a Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting. It is the responsibility of the applicant to call in/sign in/log on promptly at the beginning of the Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting and make sure that their presence/participation is noted, as a role call will be conducted at the outset of the meeting. A LOI submitted by an applicant not in attendance will not be considered. The Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting will be held as follows:

Date: April 6, 2022

Time: 10:30 am

The Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting will provide the applicant with an opportunity to ask questions about the RLI requirements, the award process, and to clarify technical aspects of this RLI. This ensures that all potential bidders have equal access to information. Questions regarding intent or allowable responses to this RLI, outside the Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting, are not permitted. Specific individual guidance will not be provided to individual bidders at any time.

Potential applicants to this RLI are required to register for the Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting via the registration link <https://dmhas.dhs.state.nj.us/events/cbclcc/register.aspx> **no later than 4pm on April 5, 2022**. A separate link to access the Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting will be sent to those that register via the registration link. Additionally, if you require assistance with this registration link, please contact MH.upload@dhs.nj.us no later than two (2) days prior to the Mandatory Bidders Virtual Meeting.

Additionally, bidders must request login credentials by emailing MH.upload@dhs.nj.gov **on or before April 13, 2022** in order to receive unique login credentials to upload your proposal to the SFTP site. Email requests for login credentials must include the individual's first name, last name, email address and name of agency/provider.

Proposals must be uploaded to the DHS SFTP site, <https://securexfer.dhs.state.nj.us/login> using your unique login credentials.

Review of LOIs:

There will be a review process for all timely submitted LOIs. DMHAS will convene a review committee of public employees to conduct a review of each LOI accepted for review.

The applicant must obtain a minimum score of 70 out of 100 points for the proposal narrative and budget sections (see below for details) in order to be considered eligible for funding.

DMHAS will award up to 20 points for fiscal viability, using a standardized scoring rubric based on the audit, which will be added to the average score given to the LOI from the review committee. Thus, the maximum points any LOI can receive is 120 points, which includes the combined score from the LOI narrative and budget as well as fiscal viability.

Contract award recommendations will be based on such factors as the LOI scope, quality and appropriateness, bidder history and experience, as well as budget reasonableness. The review committee may invite an applicant for interview and/or review any programmatic or fiscal documents in the possession of DMHAS. The applicant is advised that the contract award may be conditional upon final contract and budget negotiation.

DMHAS reserves the right to reject any and all LOIs when circumstances indicate that it is in its best interest to do so. DMHAS' best interests in this context include, but are not limited to, loss of funding, inability of the applicant(s) to provide adequate services, an indication of misrepresentation of information and/or non-compliance with State and federal laws and regulations, existing DHS contracts, and procedures set forth in DHS Policy Circular P1.04 <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/olra/contracting/policy/>.

Application:

Applicants interested in being considered for this 988 Capacity Building grant should provide the following information for its LOI. Limit the Narrative Response to eight (8) pages. Narrative Response must be single-spaced with one (1") inch margins, normal character spacing that is not condensed, and no smaller than twelve (12) point Arial, Courier New or Times New Roman font. DMHAS will not consider any information submitted beyond the page limit.

Response Narrative (Maximum 8 pages)

A. Mission and Background of Agency: 5 Points

Please provide the mission and brief historical background of the organization. Include the organization's experience with responding to calls, chats and/or texts related to mental health crisis and suicidal ideation.

B. Project Description: 70 Points (total)

Detail the following:

Staffing – 35 Points

- Provide details on the additional staff, in full-time equivalencies, for each staff category that will be employed through this initiative. This should include clear details on whether current staff (e.g. per diem staff) will be used and/or whether new staff will be hired and on-boarded.

- Describe strategies for rapid recruitment including efforts to employ Spanish speakers and members of underserved populations.
- List in a table the qualifications (i.e., professional licensing and related experience) of the new staff allocated to and/or planned for this initiative.
- Detail how the additional staff will be hired and trained by June 15, 2022.
- Provide details on the staff's linguistic capabilities. Specify the center's access to linguistic capability in meeting caller's needs.
- Briefly detail activities related to addressing diversity, inclusion, equity, and cultural/linguistic competence with staff.
- Discuss the space and technological capacity of the current center to accommodate the additional staff necessary for this initiative.

Service Delivery – 35 Points

- Using current center data, demonstrate the need for the proposed staff and/or technology.
- Detail the impact that the expanded staffing will have on the center's call answer rate and follow-up capacity outlined by Vibrant (see endnote below).
- Detail and quantify how the proposed new staff/technology will improve the center's ability to respond to crisis calls, chats and/or texts (as applicable) and transition service users to appropriate community services (e.g. acute care or outpatient services, peer/recovery support services, etc.) based on initial assessment.
- Provide information on center's recent success with handling calls, chats and/or texts. Specifically, provide 6 -12 months of data for: number of contacts answered/month, average answer rate, average speed to answer. In addition, provide the minimum and maximum number of staff/volunteers answering calls at any one time during the week.
- Include how the center will respond to the diversity of language, beliefs, norms and values of callers, as well as how the center will address issues of cultural competence, access for all ages (youth, adults and seniors) and generational influences, disabilities acquired later in life, religion and spiritual orientation, ethnic and racial identity, sexual orientation, and the needs of indigenous populations.
- List proposed primary and back up counties to be covered by proposed services.

C. Implementation Timeline: 5 points

Please provide a timeline starting from notification of award on April 27, 2022 through implementation by June 15, 2022.

D. Budget Clarity: 15 points

Provide a clearly detailed budget using Excel Budget Template to be provided.

E. Attestations: 5 Points

- Include an attestation that you will comply with all reporting requirements.
- Include an attestation that funding received from this initiative will not be used for other agency projects.

PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Incorporated Name of Bidder: _____

Type: Public _____ **Profit** _____ **Non-Profit** _____ **Hospital-Based** _____

Federal ID Number: _____ **Reg. Number** _____

DUNS Number: _____

Address of Bidder: _____

Chief Executive Officer Name: _____

Chief Executive Officer Title: _____

Phone No.: _____ **Email:** _____

Contact Person Name and Title: _____

Phone No.: _____ **Email:** _____

Total dollar amount requested: _____

Minimum number of 988 calls to be answered annually: _____

NOTE: In order to contract with the State of New Jersey, all providers applying for contracts, or responding to Request for Proposals (RFPs) or Request for Letters of Interest (RLI), *MUST* be pre-registered with the online eProcurement system known as NJSTART. You may register your organization by proceeding to the following web site: www.nj.gov/transportation/business/procurement/njstart.shtm. Or via telephone: (609) 341-3500.

Authorization: Chief Executive Officer (printed name): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____