

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act
Disaster Response Crisis Counseling
County Grants

August 1, 2023

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Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

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I. Purpose and Intent

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is issuing a Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) to County Mental Health Administrators in New Jersey. This RLI will provide grant funding for Disaster Response Crisis Counseling (DRCC) programs. Through this RLI, County Mental Health Administrators can apply through a Letter of Interest (LOI) for funding to support their pre-existing county DRCC programs. DMHAS will award up to 21 grants. Each county in New Jersey may be awarded up to one (1) grant.

Successful applicants must clearly describe through the post-award reporting process that their DRCC program is expanding by way of eligible volunteers and that activities are being performed that will sustain and enrich this vital volunteer workforce.

The purpose of the grant is to:

1. Address the shortage of Disaster Response Crisis Counselors State-wide; ensuring that New Jersey has a robust number of Crisis Counselors that can respond to natural and man-made disasters.
2. Encourage and enhance the recruitment of a trained and vetted Crisis Counselor volunteer workforce.
3. Support County Mental Health Administrators in engaging, training and sustaining DRCCs in their respective counties.

DMHAS will:

- Provide up to \$30,000 to support each New Jersey county that is selected for funding; DMHAS will award up to 21 grants totaling up to \$630,000.
- Monitor successful applicant's efforts to recruit and maintain volunteers through a quarterly reporting process.
- Collaborate with County Mental Health Administrators and support their efforts to enhance DRCC programs.

Successful DRCC applicants will be expected to accomplish the following:

1. Create and execute a plan to increase the number of Crisis Counselors that are available to respond to community crises;
2. Conduct recruitment and engagement activities that result in the expansion of the DRCC volunteer workforce in their assigned county;
3. Provide opportunities for general and specialized training and or exercise drills for new and existing Crisis Counselors;

4. Maintain documentation that demonstrates the completion of activities such as training attendance sheets, receipts, etc.; and
5. Comply with the quarterly reporting schedule, updating DMHAS staff on activities and spending.

II. The RLI timeline

The RLI timeline is anticipated as follows:

August 1, 2023:	Release of RLI
September 15, 2023:	Deadline for receipt of LOI no later than 4:00 pm ET
October 13, 2023:	Announcement of awards

III. Background

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) (P.L. 117-159) provides \$250 million in supplemental funding for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG), to enable States, the District of Columbia, and territories to expand access to mental health care. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has recommended that State behavioral health systems examine what is needed to address the need for mental health services in the aftermath of traumatic events in communities. As a part of these efforts, the State of New Jersey was awarded \$1,835,885.

DMHAS's Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) is a specialized behavioral health-focused unit within DMHAS. DTB is responsible for activating the State's behavioral health disaster response plan in coordination with the NJ Office of Emergency Management and the NJ Emergency Social Services Coordinators, during declared disasters. The services available through DTB include but are not limited to:

- › Individual crisis counseling
- › Psychological First Aid
- › Disaster-specific psycho-educational information
- › Group crisis counseling
- › Consultation and training
- › Information and referral services
- › Toll-free warm line services

Each county (21 in total) in the State also maintains a county-specific all hazards behavioral health disaster plan. During times of disaster, a county's plan may also be activated by the County Mental Health Administrator in coordination with the County Office of Emergency Management and in collaboration with State partners.

In 2007, DTB began the DRCC Certification Program. Crisis Counselors are trained and vetted (through an application process including a background check and interview) volunteers who are deployed county or State-wide in the immediate aftermath of a community crisis. With the help of BSCA funding, DTB plans to increase the number of

volunteers and scope of the DRCC program in order to have a more robust volunteer workforce and specialized crisis task force for specific response types such as mass casualty events. The development of such unique task force teams to deploy to incidents of mass casualties will require coordination with law enforcement, medical examiner offices and healthcare systems. The preparation of DRCC teams to respond to more complex anticipated and no-notice events is a vital part of response efforts. There has been a decrease over time in the number of available Crisis Counselors State-wide. This impact is felt as fewer volunteers are available to respond when needed.

IV. Funding Availability

As disaster response is always local first, each county may be eligible for a grant to fund recruitment, exercise drills, training activities as well as engagement efforts for DRCC. Each county can be awarded up to \$30,000 as a result of this grant opportunity. The funds will be disbursed in two increments of \$15,000. The funding period begins October 2023. Successful applicants can expect the first disbursement in 2023 and the second in 2024. The total allocated for DRCC is \$630,000, intended to benefit each county in New Jersey. Based on the number of applicants, narrative and budget quality, successful applicants could receive more than the proposed \$30,000 award amount if all funds are not expended.

This funding is a time-limited opportunity to specifically address the need for a robust Crisis Counselor volunteer workforce in New Jersey. County Mental Health Administrators will submit a written narrative that proposes ways in which they plan to meet the outlined objectives as well as a proposed budget indicating ways in which funds will be spent.

V. Eligibility Criteria and LOI Requirements

To be considered for this opportunity, the following criteria must be met:

1. Applicant must be applying on behalf of one of New Jersey's twenty-one counties; and
2. Applicant must have a pre-existing DRCC program which it agrees to expand and enhance.

The LOI must be written in 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font and be no longer than three (3) pages, not including the cover sheet or budget. The LOI must be double-spaced with one-inch margins and correspond to the numbering below. Your LOI must:

1. State your county's current number of Crisis Counselors (**5 points**).
2. Describe past or current successes and challenges with expanding or sustaining the DRCC workforce in your county (**10 points**).

3. Explain the DRCC needs in your county and sustainability plan if applicable (**20 points**).
4. Outline how potential Crisis Counselors will be recruited, trained and sustained (**10 points**).
5. Attestation indicating you will comply with all reporting requirements, and that funding received from this initiative will not be used for other purposes (**5 points**).
6. Describe proposed plans to utilize the funds including a timeline of activities (**25 points**).
7. Clearly describe a proposed budget that includes categories of spending (**25 points**).

VI. Submission Instructions

In addition to the LOI, all submissions must include the following:

A completed Attachment A – LOI Cover Sheet, as provided in this RLI.

A completed Attachment B – Budget Narrative Template, as provided in this RLI.

DMHAS will select awardees based on the responses to the information outlined in Section V of this RLI.

All LOIs must be submitted no later than 4:00 pm ET on September 15, 2023, by emailing: the Disaster & Terrorism Branch at dmhas-dtb.programs@dhs.nj.gov. Please include the name of the county you represent in the email subject line.

DMHAS will notify selected applicants by October 13, 2023, after which time DMHAS will contact the person named as the contact person on the LOI Cover Sheet (Attachment A).

VII. Review of LOIs:

DMHAS assumes no responsibility and bears no liability for costs incurred in the preparation and submittal of the LOI. 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 narrative and budget sections in order to be considered eligible for funding. Award recommendations will be based on such factors as the LOI scope, quality and appropriateness, as well as budget reasonableness. The review committee may invite applicants for interview and/or to review any programmatic or fiscal documents in the possession of DMHAS. DMHAS reserves the right to reject any and all LOIs when circumstances indicate that doing so is in its best interest. DMHAS's 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/> .

Attachment A: LOI Cover Sheet
Date Received

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Name of RLI: **BSCA DRCC County Grants**

Total dollar amount being requested (up to 30k per county): \$ _____

Address: _____

Mental Health Administrator Name and County: _____

Phone No.: _____ Email Address: _____

Contact Person Name and Title: _____

Phone No.: _____ Email Address: _____

Signature: _____

Attachment B: Proposed Budget Narrative Template

Please use this form to specifically describe the breakdown of funds proposed for each category, the total should not exceed \$30,000.

Budget Category	Proposed Budget Narrative
Training	Total Training: \$ (breakdown cost)
Recruitment	Total Recruitment: \$ (breakdown cost)
Engagement	Total Engagement: \$ (breakdown cost)
Supplies	Total Supplies: \$ (breakdown cost)
Equipment	Total Equipment: \$ (breakdown cost)
Other	Total Other: \$ (breakdown cost)
Total	