



Administration for Children's Services
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Concept Paper

Services for Youth and Families at Risk of Entering the Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) System

This concept paper is being offered to New York City's private provider community and the general public to help frame and give purpose to the Request for Proposals – which the Administration for Children's Services expects to release in early 2009 – for services targeted toward children and families at risk of entering the Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) system.

1. Background

The New York City Administration for Children's Services ("ACS") was formed in 1996 with the mission of ensuring the safety and well-being of New York City's approximately two million children, who live in the five counties/boroughs that comprise New York City. To fulfill this mission, we operate the city's child welfare, child care, and Head Start systems. Our child care system is the largest publicly funded child care system in the United States, serving approximately 110,000 low-income children through family care, center-based care, and voucher payments. ACS also operates a city-wide Head Start contract that serves approximately 19,000 children. ACS's child welfare system is made up of three main services:

Protection – ACS's Division of Child Protection investigates over 60,000 reports of abuse or neglect each year.

Prevention – ACS's preventive services are provided through a combination of directly-operated and contracted programs. Approximately 37,000 children and their families receive preventive services at any given time.

Foster Care – ACS oversees contracts with non-profit social service organizations to provide foster care services. Approximately 17,000 children are currently in foster care in New York City.

In recent years, ACS has also become the leading provider of assessment and diversion services for status offenders (referred to in New York State as "persons in need of supervision" or "PINS") in New York City. Status offenders are young people charged with offenses unique to their status as juveniles, such as truancy, ungovernability or running away. In 2002, the Family Assessment Program (FAP) was created to help families on the brink of entering the PINS system resolve behavioral – but not criminal – problems without resorting to the family court or foster care placement. FAP aims to connect children and families in crisis to appropriate services quickly, and draws upon community-based supports to

strengthen family functioning, with the ultimate goal of helping families avoid entering the PINS system. FAP represented a significant departure from the approach New York City had taken to PINS services for close to two decades. Previously, the Department of Probation was the gatekeeper for the PINS process; under FAP, that role shifted to ACS.

ACS has always been and continues to be committed to ensuring a strong community-based focus to its work. The agency organizes much of its operations along community lines, and its staff works closely with New York City neighborhoods and their residents and stakeholders to inform the development and management of ACS services. In its management of FAP, and its work with youth and families on the brink of entering the PINS system, ACS adheres to the axiom that families are better served at home, in their communities, and without reliance on the Family Court if at all possible.

2. Purpose of the RFP in Advancing ACS's Mission and Goals

The child welfare system in New York City is committed to achieving five primary goals:

1. No child we come into contact with will be left to struggle alone with abuse or neglect.
2. No family who needs and wants help to keep their children safe will be left without the help it needs.
3. Every child we come into contact with will get the help she/he needs to be healthy and achieve her/his full educational and developmental potential.
4. No child in our care will leave us without a caring, committed, permanent family.
5. Every team member at Children's Services and each of our partner agencies can expect guidance, respect and emotional support to achieve our goals. Every child, family, community member and foster parent we come into contact with will be treated with the same concern and respect.

The upcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) aims to create a partnership with the City's private, non-profit agencies to achieve these very challenging goals for families in crises who are on the brink of entering the PINS system. Through the RFP, ACS will invest in the creation of a more robust continuum of therapeutic interventions for youth and families that are in need of services and are referred to the Family Assessment Program (FAP), and augment the availability of community-based services specifically designed for families at risk of PINS.

Today, parents typically bring their child in to FAP offices for assistance with behavioral issues such as truancy, ungovernability, or substance use. At FAP offices, they meet with a family assessment specialist, an experienced ACS employee with a master's degree in social work, who conducts an assessment of the underlying sources of conflict. The social worker then refers the family to additional services, which may include further assessment, counseling, educational advocacy, and community services. In a majority of cases, families are referred to a nonprofit social service provider known as the Designated Assessment Service (DAS), which offers a more comprehensive assessment and targeted service referrals.

ACS is currently conducting a strategic redesign of FAP and intends to implement program improvements, and procedural and operational modifications over the next 15 months. ACS recognizes that the youth and families referred to FAP present with a diverse array and intensity of needs. The re-design effort by ACS intends to create a streamlined system that responds to the varying service needs

of families as quickly and efficiently as possible, and concentrates resources and services where they are needed most. In lieu of assuming most cases will benefit from an intensive DAS assessment before accessing services, FAP will conduct a youth and family needs assessment in-house and make a direct referral, if necessary, to an appropriate service based on the intensity and type of family needs.

Services to be procured through the RFP

To help implement the agenda described above, ACS is seeking appropriately qualified organizations to provide services to the FAP population. These new contracts will replace DAS contracts with a continuum of direct services to meet families' needs and reduce the number of handoffs that are experienced in the current system, where families who need service move from FAP to DAS, and then to a service provider. All proposers are encouraged to consider making intensive assessment part of their short term intervention.

Applicants should demonstrate capacity to provide a range of services for low, mid and high need youth, and will be expected to adhere to a "no reject" policy. This policy will place the burden of finding appropriate services for families on the contracted agency in the event that the agencies' services turn out to be mismatched to a particular family's needs. Applicants should also demonstrate strong relationships with other community resources in the geographic areas they propose to serve, and a willingness to foster links to such community resources.

Across all areas, evidence-based models are desirable and encouraged. Proven effectiveness on the part of applicant agencies—in terms of both the agencies' demonstrated expertise and experience with the target population as well as the evidence base supporting the proposed service model—will play an important role in the RFP, but new agencies are encouraged to respond, especially when they can partner with agencies that have strong track records.

Services procured through the upcoming RFP will be provided to children and youth residing in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island. Applicants should specify the neighborhoods they propose to serve. Providers should be able to deliver services in a manner that reduces travel burdens for youth and families (e.g., in the home or via satellite offices).

All services purchased through the PINS RFP will be considered preventive services and subject to State requirements for services, case work contacts, safety and risk assessment and other program elements. Programs also will be expected to meet ACS local standards for program services and reporting. Selected providers will be expected to track and report outcomes to demonstrate effectiveness throughout the contract term. Outcomes of interest include, but are not limited to: limiting subsequent referrals to FAP, diversion from Family Court (including a PINS or delinquency case), diversion from foster care, improvements in school attendance and performance, and improvements in family functioning. Providers that serve high need youth may be responsible for Family Court appearances, reports and training for staff for PINS cases that are in Family Court.

To support the creation of a flexible and seamless service continuum for the children and families FAP serves, providers should offer a broad range of services – directly or through linkages with other organizations – within their programs to ensure that a child's and his/her family's needs are identified and met appropriately and expeditiously.

ACS will manage these contracted services in a way that aligns with and advances the continued reform and strengthening of the City's child welfare system. To this end, the following principles, goals and expectations will drive the design and delivery of all services in the upcoming RFP:

- Youth and families should receive meaningful and appropriate interventions provided in a timely fashion and with minimal handoffs
- The intensity and method of intervention should be tailored to the specific needs of the family, with flexibility built into the program design
- Programs should have the capacity to provide assessment, crisis intervention, and clinical intervention in a seamless and coordinated fashion, and whenever possible, through a single, comprehensive service intervention rather than a diffuse system of multiple service referrals
- Services should be generally time-defined and short term to enable the ability to serve a high volume of referrals
- Services should be family-centered and home-based whenever possible, or be located in the neighborhoods where youth and families live
- Services should address language access issues and be culturally competent
- Some programs will be needed for special populations, including but not limited to LGBTQ youth, sexually exploited youth, and youth with significant psychiatric needs;
- Services should promote school engagement and link youth to pro-social activities in the community.
- Services will be expected to collaborate with the education system and help youth achieve educational placements consistent with their needs and goals.
- Services should include the capacity to provide psychiatric/psychological evaluations and interventions and/or have collaborations with the mental health system.

3. Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals

Upon receipt, all proposals will be reviewed for responsiveness. The agency will evaluate all responsive proposals based on the following criteria: experience, organizational capability, and program approach. At this point, the agency is still determining percent allocations for each weighted criteria.

4. Proposed Term of the Contract(s)

It is anticipated that the term of the contract(s) awarded from the RFP will be for a three (3) year period with an option to renew for two (2) additional three (3) year terms.

5. Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that the RFP will be released in early 2009. A pre-proposal conference will be held approximately 2 weeks after the release of the RFP. The Proposal due date will be approximately 4 weeks after the pre-proposal conference. It is anticipated that the contractor(s) will be selected by late 2009.

6. Total Funding Available/Sources of Funding

The available annual funding for the contracts awarded from this RFP is approximately \$14 million. The amount to be allocated to each borough will be determined by the actual need at the time of award.

7. **Anticipated Number of Contracts**

ACS anticipates funding 5-15 Community District specific contracts. This is different from the current system, where there is only one program per borough, which has created a travel burden for families.

8. **Participant Population(s) to be Served**

The population to be served is children and families referred to the Family Assessment Program. Youth must not exceed the age of eighteen.

9. **Vendor Performance Reporting Requirements**

The contractor will be required to submit for performance assessment all case or program related documentation, including but not limited to the electronic case record, court reports and other documents, medical records, educational records, case conference reports, abuse/neglect reports, personnel files, program logs associated with facilities, supervision, or critical incidents or activities as requested by ACS, consistent with governing law.

All comments regarding this concept report must be received by January 15, 2008. Comments should be sent to:

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