



**Department of
Youth & Community
Development**

November 20, 2008

Dear Community Members:

In preparation for release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Family Literacy Services, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has developed a Concept Paper, a copy of which is attached, that presents the agency's approach to this important service area. Through Family Literacy programs, both parents and children improve their skills while parents learn to become full partners in their children's education.

The Concept Paper outlines modifications to the current program model that reflect DYCD's experience supporting Family Literacy programs since 2003. Additional input from current family literacy providers was obtained through focus groups and program reports. To accommodate the concerns of parents and expand access to services, more flexible program hours and schedules are among the proposed changes. Programs would be permitted to integrate the parent resource component with adult education, and also would have the option of allowing some portion of the required "parent and child together" (PACT) time to take place in the families' homes. The Concept Paper anticipates that programs under the new RFP will operate year-round, with reduced summer hours, and provide activities for young children who are below the age for enrollment, but accompany their parents to program activities. The Concept Paper also notes that DYCD will invite proposals to serve families such as those living in homeless shelters or those in which a parent is incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, or participating in a drug treatment program.

Your feedback is critical to our planning process. We invite you to review the Concept Paper and email your comments to: CP@dycd.nyc.gov. Please enter Family Literacy Services in the subject line of the email. If you prefer, written comments may be mailed to:

Nancy Russell
Planning, Research, and Program Development
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10038

Please note that we are only able to consider comments received no later than December 22, 2008.

The Concept Paper is posted on our website at www.nyc.gov/dycd. I urge you to notify any others who are interested in Family Literacy Services and to share with us your thoughts regarding this solicitation.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav



Department of Youth & Community Development

Jeanne B. Mullgrav
Commissioner

Family Literacy Services Concept Paper

Purpose of the RFP

To sustain and further develop an ongoing initiative, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) intends to seek qualified organizations to provide literacy services to New York City families with young children. The Family Literacy Program will address the educational and individual needs of parents and their school-aged children through a coordinated set of four components: adult literacy, children's education, parent and child together (PACT) time (parent/child interactions centered on literacy), and parent resource time (parent knowledge of child development and parenting strategies). The program will improve a broad range of competencies related to literacy, such as basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), communication within the family, parental understanding of child development and positive parenting skills, workplace skills, and strengthened relationships between parents and their children's schools. Parents will become full partners in their children's education.

In the upcoming Family Literacy Services Request for Proposals (RFP), DYCD will introduce the following modifications to the current program model. The program service design has been changed to allow for more flexibility and programs may now integrate the parent resource component with adult literacy. In addition, a portion of the PACT time may take place in the family's home. To increase accessibility and engagement, DYCD will encourage programs to operate during the summer. The target population remains the same in the upcoming RFP, however the eligible age range has been changed to families with children between the ages of five and ten years old. DYCD will also now require programs to accommodate young children who are below the age of enrollment, but accompany their parents to program activities. These modifications are described in more detail below.

Background

In an increasingly complex, knowledge-based society, basic skills and educational attainment have become ever more important to enable a person to compete in the global economy and pursue learning throughout life. About two million immigrants come to the United States each year, 50 percent of whom have low literacy skills and lack a high school education and English language skills.¹ One in four U.S. working families is low-income and one in five children lives in poverty.² Low literacy levels and poverty are interrelated; parents and caregivers in many poor families do not have the skills to earn high enough wages to support their families.

Inadequate basic skills are associated with unemployment, poor health and nutrition, and substandard housing³ and affect the whole family. Children from families with undereducated parents perform at the lowest levels in school. They are more likely to be absent and less likely to complete school, enroll in higher education, or secure

¹National Commission on Adult Literacy, "Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce," *Report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy*, June 2008, p. v.

²*Ibid.*, p. v.

³Dr. Andrew Hayes, "High Quality Family Literacy Programs: Adult Outcomes and Impacts," National Center for Family Literacy, *Family Literacy Research and Statistics*, 2006; www.familit.org/site/apps/nlet/content2.aspx?b=2009009&c=gtJWJdMQIsE&ct=28...

high-paying jobs.⁴ Family literacy programs simultaneously improve the skills of both parents and children, while providing the supports that strengthen the family as a whole.

Family Literacy Services

The integration of services for parents and children is the crux of family literacy services. The assumption is that the combined effect of the program components will have a greater impact than providing each one separately. Data from several evaluation studies of family literacy programs showed that parents' academic gains and attendance and retention rates were greater than those reported in a separate adult education only program. A significant number achieved the GED, became employed, or enrolled in post-secondary education or a job training program, and parents became more active in the community by participating in the PTA, becoming church leaders, volunteers in community organizations, and regular participants in school functions.⁵

DYCD has funded family literacy programs since 2003, currently allocating \$2.3 million to community-based organizations to provide fifteen programs throughout New York City. Each year, over 350 adults and 500 children participate. Programs have reported noteworthy improvements by both children and parents. As reported by their classroom teachers and parents, participating children are more motivated to learn, have greater self-confidence, and therefore do better academically. Parents have improved their literacy skills as well. Parents are more aware of the resources available to support their families and have increased their involvement in their children's education and schools. They go to the library and read with their children, and they participate in school activities by working as volunteers and attending Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

In recognition of the success of family literacy programming, the New York Times Company Foundation, the Altman Foundation, the Literacy Assistance Center, and DYCD teamed up to form the Immigrant Family Literacy Alliance (IFLA). IFLA is a unique collaboration of government, foundations, and non-profits committed to expanding the number of families enrolled in the City's family literacy programs by dedicating additional private funds to existing programs.

Program Design

The program design for family literacy services will contain the following components. DYCD will consider alternative program designs to the traditional four-component family literacy model, provided the components of the proposed program model are adequately designed to achieve the goals of family literacy.

- Adult Literacy (ABE or ESOL or both)
 - Instruction in literacy and language
 - Adult Literacy may incorporate Parent Resource Time through a curriculum that is contextualized around parenting and child development, life skills, resources that support families, and strategies that will help parents to participate in the public school system and support their children's education.
- Children's Education
 - Activities and curriculum that reinforce and augment, rather than repeat, school-day instruction
 - Enhancement of children's academic knowledge and performance
- PACT Time
 - Instruction in strategies for parents and children to improve literacy skills together, such as learning games, homework help, reading together
 - Up to two hours of PACT Time each week may take place in the family's home. Time spent would be verified by sharing projects in class or providing appropriate documentation, such as an

⁴Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, "Family Literacy: A Research Agenda to Build the Future," *Report from Penn State's Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy Think Tank*, October 15-16, 2001, p. 7.

⁵Op cit., Hayes.

activity log. Activities would be clearly focused on literacy such as reading together, homework assistance, and theme-based projects, and would be integrated with the other program components.

- Parent Resource Time
 - Support for parents in participating in the public school system, strategies that lead to effective support of children's education, life and parenting skills, and general family support
 - Time would also be allocated for parents to discuss individual issues, including child-rearing, discipline techniques, job experiences, cultural diversity and identity, and personal goals and experiences.

Target Population

Family literacy services are intended for families in which the parent(s) have limited English-language and/or literacy skills. Parents will be 16 or older with a child or children aged 5-10. All youth participants must be enrolled in public school. DYCD also will accept proposals for family literacy services that target families such as those living in homeless shelters or families in which a parent is incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, or participating in a drug treatment program. Programs in institutions would need strong administrative support to provide meaningful parent/child interactions and must be able to provide activities that clearly support the goals of family literacy.

Service Level

Each program will serve at least 20 families at any given time during the program year.⁶

Attendance and Retention

Programs will conduct focused outreach efforts and engage in strategies to support program attendance and retention.

Program Hours

Programs will seek to accommodate the needs of working parents and, if applicable, special populations. The weekly minimum hours are as follows:

- 6 hours of adult education instruction
- 3 hours of children's education
- 4 hours PACT time instruction
- 2 hours of parent resource time (With approval, parent resource time may be integrated into adult education class time.)

With appropriate justification, alternative program hours will be considered.

Schedule

Programs would operate throughout the year. Program hours during the public school summer vacation period may be modified to a minimum of four hours of Adult Education and two hours of PACT. If the program proposes not to include summer programming, justification must be provided. DYCD will proportionately reduce funding awarded to a provider that proposes to offer a program only during the school year.

School Linkages

Programs will establish linkage agreements with all schools attended by participating youth. Linkage agreements would address issues such as adequate dedicated space for the program within the host school; availability of other school resources such as the school library and computer room; integration and coordination of program and school curricula; and regular meetings among program staff and school personnel, including teachers, guidance counselors, parent coordinators, principals, and others who interact with program participants. The school linkage agreements would be signed by the school principals.

⁶With justification, organizations proposing services for special populations may propose serving fewer families.

Activities for Young Children

Programs will provide age-appropriate educational and child development activities for young children under age five or not yet enrolled in public school who accompany enrolled parents during program hours. Activities will take place in a separate but adjacent space and be supervised by staff with appropriate experience and training.

Outcomes

Programs would be required to track and report on the following outcomes, using the delineated indicators and methods of verification.⁷ The contractor would deliver ongoing assessment services to evaluate progress toward outcome achievement and work with family members to develop a plan for achieving family goals.

Outcomes	Indicators	Verification
Parents will demonstrate improved English language and/or basic literacy skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty-five to 40 percent of participant parents advance at least one National Reporting System (NRS) level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TABE or BEST Plus
Parents will increase their knowledge of parenting skills and child development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents demonstrate increased knowledge of parenting skills and child development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and post-surveys regarding parents’ knowledge of child development and parenting techniques.
Parents will increase their participation in children’s education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents become more involved in children’s schools and school activities. • Parents engage in literacy-related activities with their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PACT time instructor observation of child/ parent interactions • Activity logs
Parents will achieve one or more of the following workforce outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents will enroll in job-training programs. • Parents will enter and retain employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifty percent of parents who identify employment as a primary reason for enrollment enter job training or become employed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of pay stubs. • Employment verification letters.
Children will improve academic achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children demonstrate gains in achieving appropriate standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of report cards • Portfolios • Instructor logs/reports • Additional verification methods proposed for consideration by proposer

Staffing

The contractor will create full-time positions wherever possible and appropriate in order to encourage program continuity and quality instruction and to provide staff access to benefits such as paid leave and health insurance.

Key staff will be appropriately trained and experienced and preferably licensed in areas such as adult basic education, childhood education, and social work. An appropriately qualified staff person(s) will be available to provide activities for young children, not enrolled in the program, who accompany parents during program hours.

The contractor would ensure that all paid staff members, as well as any volunteers, are qualified and appropriately trained in family development. The contractor would provide program staff with information on

⁷All outcomes may not be appropriate for programs serving special populations.

the Family Development Training and Credentialing Program (FDC) and, where appropriate, refer staff for training. Paid staff members are eligible for scholarships to FDC, offered through DYCD.

DYCD has developed a set of core competencies and corresponding indicators for youth workers, to serve as a guide for training and supervising quality youth workers. These competencies and indicators are available at DYCD and are posted on DYCD's website at www.dycd.nyc.gov.

Staff Development

Literacy programs must insure that services are provided by qualified instructors and overseen by administrators knowledgeable in successful literacy practices. Research has demonstrated that professional development leads to improved reading ability for students.⁸ Programs would incorporate high-quality ongoing professional development to insure that instructors are familiar with strategies proven to be effective in teaching literacy to adults and children. Each instructional staff member would receive a minimum of ten hours of staff development annually.

In addition, program staff would hold regular meetings to review progress, exchange information, and share instructional strategies. Program directors would also be expected to attend periodic meetings sponsored by DYCD to share best practices and address issues that may arise in the course of delivering literacy programming.

Cultural Sensitivity

All program staff, including volunteers, must provide services in a manner sensitive to the characteristics of the target population. Materials and curricula should reflect the lives, experiences, and interests of the participants.

Experience

DYCD anticipates that selected contractors and key staff would have at least three years of experience in the last five years in providing literacy services to both adults and school-aged children.

Support Services

The contractor would provide the appropriate setting and support services and work collaboratively with schools, businesses, and community organizations to insure that participants have access to comprehensive services and a continuum of instruction to meet their educational, personal, and career goals. Contractors serving populations in institutional settings would have strong links to community organizations that would facilitate transition from institutional life. As appropriate, the contractor would:

- Develop referral arrangements for GED instruction and testing.
- Assist students with transitions as they move from one educational setting to another or to a work setting.
- Make individual or group counseling available either directly or through referral.
- Provide career counseling either directly or through referral.
- Provide information and referral services, entitlement assistance, and advocacy.
- Meet regularly with other literacy providers in the geographic area.

Enhanced Support Services

If additional funding becomes available, programs would implement focused and innovative strategies to assist parents with "next steps," such as transitions to employment, entrepreneurship, other educational and training programs, and college.

Funding Levels and Competition Pools

It is anticipated that funding for family literacy programs will total \$2.4 million. DYCD anticipates awarding up to 18 contracts with programs in each of the five boroughs. Additional private funding may become available

⁸Michael L. Kamil, "Adolescents and Literacy: Reading for the 21st Century," A report from Carnegie Corporation of New York (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education), 2003, p. 25.

and would be used to provide enhanced support services for parents as they move toward economic independence through employment or further education or training.

Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP which will include: quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and quality of proposed program approach. DYCD reserves the right to make site visits, conduct interviews, and request that proposers make presentations as DYCD deems appropriate.

Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement in the winter of 2008. The proposal submission deadline will be approximately one month from the release of the RFP. DYCD anticipates entering into three-year contracts with the option to renew for three additional years for programs to begin summer of 2009.

Comments

Please email written comments to cp@dycd.nyc.gov with 'Family Literacy' in the subject line no later than Monday December 22, 2008.

Comments may also be mailed to:

Nancy Russell
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, Second Floor
New York, NY 10038