



**NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SERVING NEW YORK CITY YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES**

156 William Street
New York, New York 10038
Phone 212.442.5900 Fax 212.442.9196
TTY 212.442.5903 www.nyc.gov/dycd

JEANNE B. MULLGRAV
Commissioner

June 2008

Dear Community Members:

We are pleased to announce the issue of a new Concept Paper, a copy of which is attached, relating to Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) services. This Concept Paper is a precursor to a forthcoming RFP and we invite you to review it and send us your comments.

As you may know, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) funds a range of programs to address the specific needs of RHY. In 2006, DYCD established a new “continuum of care” model for its RHY system that included drop-in centers for each borough, revised street outreach services, specialized residential services, and expanded shelter options. The Concept Paper outlines proposed refinements to the RHY continuum-of-care system based on lessons learned during the past two years.

We invite written feedback on the Concept Paper from all stakeholders. Please email your comments to: CP@dycd.nyc.gov. Please enter “RHY” in the subject line of your email message. If you prefer, you may mail your comments to:

Cressida Wasserman
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 written comments received, at latest, by 5:00 p.m. on July 18, 2008.

The Concept Paper will be posted on our website at www.nyc.gov/dycd. Please notify any organizations that may be interested.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

New York City Department of Youth and Community Development



Jeanne B. Mullgrav
Commissioner

Residential and Non-Residential Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

This concept paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) that will seek appropriately qualified not-for-profit organizations to provide services for runaway and homeless youth (RHY) in New York City (City) up to and including age 20, and youth at risk for homelessness. Services covered by the RFP will include Drop-In Centers, Crisis Shelters, Transitional Independent Living Programs, and Street Outreach Services. It is anticipated that the total available funding for this solicitation will be \$5.8 million.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), as the Youth Bureau for the City, supports an integrated and coordinated system of care for the RHY population of the City. In 2006, DYCD established a “continuum of care” system with drop-in centers and community connections coordinators for each borough, revised street outreach services, specialized residential services, and expanded shelter options. In addition, to ensure the best use of residential programs, DYCD required crisis shelters to undertake appropriate assessments before referring youth to transitional independent living programs. These changes were introduced to make it easier for youth and their families to access services, strengthen family connections, and lay the foundation for more effective responses to RHY and at-risk youth. The re-designed RHY services increased the depth of knowledge in DYCD, strengthened its programs, and helped expand capacity in the field. Through the upcoming RFP, DYCD will refine the model to bring further improvements. These refinements, described in detail below, include adjusting drop-in center and street outreach hours of operation to reflect usage patterns, making transportation services the responsibility of all RHY service providers, and introducing a price-per-bed range for each type of shelter.

Youth living on the streets of the City are vulnerable to many forms of abuse and exploitation, including violence and prostitution. Young people become homeless for different reasons, and, in addition to housing, employment, and education services, often need health and mental healthcare. Many run away from home as a result of conflict with their parents or others living in the household. Some have been rejected by their families, for example, because of sexual orientation, an unplanned pregnancy, problems at school, or use of drugs and alcohol. Others have been exposed to abuse, sexual exploitation, domestic violence or substance abusing parents. Some find themselves without a home when they exit detention facilities or after they have been involved in the foster care system. Regardless of the causes of their homelessness, these youth typically have a range of needs that must be addressed before they can get back on track.

In keeping with the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) of 1978 and current New York State (State) RHYA Regulations 182, DYCD will seek contractors whose programs are designed to protect runaway and homeless youth, and, whenever possible, reunite them with their families.¹ Where reunification is not a realistic option, contractors will help youth progress from crisis and transitional care to independent living. Taken together, the DYCD programs will provide an effective, integrated network of services. Through linkages and referrals, contractors will facilitate participants’ access to other relevant

¹ A copy of the Regulations has been posted on the DYCD website at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/runaway/information_for_providers.shtml

services and collaborate with City and State agencies, including the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Probation (DOP), the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and the Police Department (NYPD).

The principles of positive youth development will underscore all aspects of the programs and settings offered by residential and non-residential RHY contractors. These principles include: ensuring the safety, engagement, and empowerment of youth; building trusting relationships with them, and between them and their peers; providing positive adult role models; offering opportunities for youth to develop essential skills and competencies; and encouraging youth to strive for success, irrespective of their past histories and achievements. The activities and experiences offered by RHY programs will be designed to facilitate access to education and career development opportunities and help participants develop into healthy, caring, and responsible adults who are engaged in, and contribute to, their communities. In particular, contractors will set and maintain the highest expectations with regard to participants’ educational and employment goals.

While the RFP will seek to address the needs of some specific sub-groups, DYCD will expect all its contractors to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all groups, including young parents, victims of abuse, youth involved with the criminal or juvenile justice system, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Accordingly, staff members in all RHY programs are expected to be sensitive to the diverse cultures and backgrounds of those they serve and have appropriate training and experience to work effectively with vulnerable youth and their families. They also are expected to make participants aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the services they provide, as well as comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The RFP will cover four service options:

1. Borough-based Drop-In Centers;
2. Crisis Shelters with overall capacity of up to 62 beds;
3. Transitional Independent Living programs (TIL) with overall capacity of up to 70 beds, including one for LGBTQ youth and another for pregnant and parenting youth;
4. Street Outreach Services.

In all four service options, contractors will be expected to provide, as necessary, transportation services for youth who need to be taken to safe locations. Transportation will be part of the overall services provided by RHY programs and the costs of transportation services will not be separately funded.² In all service options, programs also will be required to have a key staff member with a master’s degree in social work or a related area and at least two years supervisory experience.

Service Option I: Borough-based Drop-In Centers

Under the DYCD Community Connections Initiative there will be a Drop-In Center (“Center”) in each of the five boroughs. Each Center will be staffed by a full-time program director and at least one “Community Connections Coordinator” with responsibility for establishing linkages with local resources, particularly

² This change is the result of an analysis of the number of requests for transportation services, which has been much lower than was anticipated when the previous RFP was issued in December 2005.

those relating to participants' educational and career development. The Centers will offer homeless and at-risk youth and their families a range of direct services and referrals to other local resources.

Each Center will be located at a site easily accessible by public transportation and will operate six (6) days a week. **Unless otherwise approved by DYCD, each Center must offer services on Saturdays and Sundays but will be allowed to close one other day during the week. The day selected for closure will be subject to DYCD approval.** DYCD anticipates that the required hours of operation for the Centers under the new contracts will be 12 noon to 9:00 p.m. on the four weekdays and 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Services provided by Drop-In Centers will include but not be limited to: crisis intervention, assessment, counseling, and mediation; life skills and work readiness; educational counseling; referrals to other service providers; and transportation to residential programs and other safe locations, as necessary. The centers will also provide informational literature on relevant topics and services.

Each Community Connections Coordinator will be required to have either 1. a four-year degree in social work or a related field or 2. four or more years of experience working with youth. They will work under the supervision of the Program Director to help youth and families access appropriate services and resources in their neighborhoods. It will be the responsibility of the Community Connections Coordinators to create direct linkages and relationships with City agencies, schools, and other RHY service providers to provide an interlocking network of services for youth and their families. Linkages with other government agencies and departments will include ACS, DOE, DOHMH, DHS, DJJ, DOP, OCFS, and NYPD.

The Community Connections Coordinators will also act as neighborhood-based advocates for RHY and at-risk youth. In addition to identifying gaps in local services for RHY and their families, they will be responsible for compiling an inventory of existing services in their communities for youth at risk of becoming homeless. They will ensure that the Drop-In Centers and other RHY resources are visible and well-known in the communities and help connect local providers to youth and to families who need their services. In addition, they will offer prevention and education workshops at schools and other relevant settings. The workshops will be designed to raise awareness of and educate the audience about risk factors and other critical issues relating to youth homelessness.

Although contractors are expected to serve their entire borough, DYCD has identified, based on an analysis of need for preventive services, community districts (CDs) in each borough that will be considered "target areas" for the services of the Community Connections Coordinators. With the exception of Staten Island, contractors will be expected to serve youth from at least two CDs. Each Drop-In Center must be situated within the borough to be served and easily accessible by public transportation to youth in the target CDs.

The target CDs for each borough are as follows: ³

- Bronx:* CD1 (Mott Haven), CD4 (Highbridge/Concourse), CD5 (University Heights), CD9 (Unionport Soundview)
- Brooklyn:* CD1 (Williamsburg/Greenpoint), CD3 (Bedford Stuyvesant), CD5 (East New York), CD16 (Brownsville)
- Manhattan:* CD3 (Lower East Side), CD9 (Manhattanville), CD10 (Central Harlem), CD11 (East Harlem), CD12 (Washington Heights)
- Queens:* CD1 (Astoria/Long Island City), CD3 (Jackson Heights), CD10 (S. Ozone Park), CD12 (Jamaica/Hollis), CD14 (Rockaway)

³ Target CDs were selected based on an analysis of data relating to risk factors for homelessness among youth, including poverty and the number of youth living in foster care.

Staten Island: CD1 (St. George/Stapleton)

DYCD will consider alternative target CDs if sufficient justification is included in the proposal.

The anticipated maximum available annual funding for five drop-in centers is \$1,530,000, to be distributed among the boroughs as follows:

Manhattan: \$320,000
Brooklyn: \$320,000
Bronx: \$320,000
Queens: \$320,000
Staten Island: \$250,000

Service Option II: Crisis Shelters

Crisis Shelters are voluntary, short-term residential programs. They are intended to provide emergency shelter and services, with the primary goal of either reuniting youth with their families or finding them appropriate long-term placements. RHY Crisis Shelters are certified by OCFS -1 and must comply with the State RHYA Regulations 182-1.

Youth in Crisis Shelters are housed on a short-term basis for up to 30 days, with a possible extension granted by DYCD for an additional 30 days. The Crisis Shelters will operate and provide staff supervision 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all youth.

Crisis Shelters may serve youth who are **either:** all under age 18 **or** between the ages of 16 and 20 (inclusive). Each Crisis Shelter will employ a full-time program director and a full-time counselor. Either the program director or the counselor is required to have a master's degree in social work or related field and at least two years relevant experience.

Crisis Shelter programs will provide shelter, food, clothing, individual and group counseling, and transportation services. They will also provide, either directly or through written agreements with other providers, the following services: medical and mental health care, including psychiatric evaluations; dental care; legal assistance; and other services needed by youth and their families.

For each youth admitted to the Crisis Shelter, the contractor must create an individual service plan which identifies immediate needs and the appropriate course of action. The Crisis Shelter will work closely with the Community Connections Coordinators of the Drop-In Centers, whose roles are to help identify youth in need of emergency shelter, as well as with the Street Outreach programs. They will also refer youth assessed to be in need of long-term placements to the TIL programs. Crisis Shelter contractors will be responsible for follow-up communication and referrals for a period of at least 90 days from the date of discharge of each youth from the Crisis Shelter.

The anticipated maximum available annual funding for up to 62 beds in up to five (5) Crisis Shelters is \$1,600,000. Anticipated allowable funding per-shelter-bed under each contract will range from \$25,000 to \$35,000.⁴ Proposers will be expected to explain and justify the costs per bed included in their budget calculations.

⁴ This cost range is comparable to congregate care rates paid by other public agencies. The costs per bed range from \$22,000 (DOHMH Supportive Housing) to \$73,000 (average rate for Group Home beds paid by State OCFS/ACS). Differences in the rates are largely due to occupancy patterns and staff-to-participant ratios.

DYCD funds separate and distinct services for RHY but will consider funding Crisis Shelter beds in residential facilities that have State OCFS certification for housing youth in foster care, provided the proposal demonstrates that the quality and integrity of services for RHY will not be compromised.

Service Option III: Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILs)

TILs provide housing for up to 18 months to RHY ages 16 to 20 (inclusive) and any dependent children, with a possible 6-months extension granted by DYCD. TILs are certified by OCFS and must comply with State RHYA Regulations 182-2. The primary goal of the TIL programs is to equip youth for whom family reunification is not an option with the skills needed to live independently, support themselves, and advance their educational and career goals. TIL residents live in a cooperative housing situation that allows them maximum responsibility for their daily lives while giving them access to on-site counseling and support services. DYCD anticipates that the contracts awarded under this service option will include one TIL designated for LGBTQ youth and another for pregnant and parenting youth.

Youth will be eligible to enter a TIL program only through referral from a DYCD Crisis Shelter or other DYCD-approval. Crisis Shelters will be required to obtain specific consent before sharing appropriate client information with other agencies. The Crisis Shelter making the referral will provide the TIL with a comprehensive assessment of the youth and a recommendation for admission. The TIL will then make its own assessment to determine whether the youth is a good fit for the program.

Each TIL will operate and provide on-site staff supervision 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The contractor will make an in-depth skills assessment and create an individual service plan for each participant. The plan will be reviewed every 30 days. Each TIL contractor will be responsible for providing follow-up communication and referrals for at least 90 days after each youth leaves the program.

The contractors will provide TIL residents with shelter, food, clothing, transportation, and individual and group counseling. They will also offer, directly or through written agreements with other providers, medical/mental health, legal, and educational services. In particular, they will make every effort to connect youth to educational and employment resources and help TIL residents grasp the critical importance of educational and other qualifications to their future success as adults.

The TIL will be expected to teach independent living skills through activities that develop each participant's problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills, focusing on topics such as employment opportunities and career pathways, effective use of leisure time, personal hygiene, health maintenance, housekeeping, and financial management.

It is anticipated that maximum total annual funding for the TIL program for up to 70 beds will be \$2.1 million, with allowable funding per bed ranging from \$30,000 to \$38,000. Proposers will be expected to explain and justify the costs per bed included in their budget calculations.

DYCD funds separate and distinct services for RHY but will consider funding TIL beds in residential facilities that have State OCFS certification for housing youth in foster care, provided the proposal demonstrates that the quality and integrity of services for RHY will not be compromised.

Service Option IV: Street Outreach

DYCD will fund a Citywide Street Outreach program for RHY and at-risk youth under the age of 21. Outreach workers will be expected to engage at least **4,000** youth annually, in the street and elsewhere, and, as necessary, provide safe transportation services for them to Crisis Shelters and other safe locations. **It is**

anticipated that DYCD will require Street Outreach services to operate 6 days a week from Wednesday through Monday or Tuesday through Sunday. Required hours per day will vary by the season, as follows:⁵

- **Fall/Winter: 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.**
- **Spring/Summer: 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.**

Under the Street Outreach program there will be two contracts, each covering a specific area of the City: (1) the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan above 59th Street; and (2) Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Manhattan 59th Street and below. **However, each contractor will be expected to respond to calls for assistance outside its specified area, if the other contractor is unavailable or the situation is an emergency.** The anticipated maximum total annual funding for Street Outreach Services is \$570,000. Proposers responding to the RFP may apply for one or for both of the Street Outreach contracts.

DYCD Street Outreach contractors will focus their efforts on locations where homeless and at risk youth are known to congregate in the evenings and at night, on weekdays and weekends. Street Outreach services will target public spaces, subway stations, and transportation hubs such as those in Jamaica, Queens, Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, and the Port Authority bus terminal in Manhattan. Proposers responding to the RFP will be expected to identify and demonstrate knowledge of popular locations and the numbers of RHY and at risk youth who typically congregate in these locations during weekdays and on weekends. **They will also be expected to demonstrate the capacity to provide safe transportation for youth to their homes, crisis shelters, or other safe locations.**

The role of the Street Outreach contractors is to distribute information about RHY services; provide resources, materials, and referrals; and transport youth to their homes, shelters, or other safe locations. By developing rapport with youth in the streets and elsewhere, outreach workers can directly inform RHY and youth at risk for homelessness about available services and refer youth and their families in need of services to the Drop-In centers and other RHY programs. In this way, the Street Outreach program serves as a point of entry into the wider DYCD RHY system.

Proposals submitted in response to the RFP will be expected to explain how services will operate within the proposed area(s), as well as identify specific places for focused outreach. However, Street Outreach services contractors will be expected to collaborate with DYCD and adjust their operations, as necessary, to ensure coverage of key locations in the City where RHY and at risk youth congregate.

Minimum Qualification Requirements

DYCD anticipates the following Minimum Qualification Requirements for the upcoming RFP, pursuant to State and City regulations. (The complete set of regulations may be found on DYCD's website. See page 2, footnote 1 above.) The proposer must be incorporated as a private, not-for-profit organization in the State. Proposers for Crisis Shelter and TIL contracts must be certified, or have filed for certification, to operate a residential facility as defined by State RHYA Regulations, by the proposal submission due date indicated in the RFP. DYCD reserves the right to conduct site visits to proposed program sites prior to the award of contracts. Youth cannot be served in an RHY residential facility until State OCFS RHY certification has been secured.⁶

⁵ DYCD reserves the right to adjust these schedules, after the award of contracts, based on actual use of these services.

⁶ State OCFS RHY certification for residential providers can take several months to complete. Proposers of programs that include sites not currently certified will be required to submit a completed State OCFS Report of Inquiry form to DYCD to begin certification.

Monitoring and Performance Reporting Requirements

DYCD will conduct regular site visits to all RHY programs. These visits will include inspection of the physical plant, operations, services provided to participants, staffing schedules, personnel and staff training records, youth case records, and other documentation required to demonstrate compliance with DYCD contract obligations and State certification regulations. Providers will also be required to submit comprehensive statistical data as requested by DYCD, including youth served, demographics, utilization rates, and referrals.

Planned Method of Proposal Evaluation

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 approach.

Proposed Term of Contracts

It is anticipated that the term of the contracts awarded from the RHY RFP will be three years, with an option to renew for up to three additional years.

Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement by fall 2008. The proposal submission deadline will be approximately six weeks after the release of the RFP. DYCD anticipates entering into three-year contracts starting July 1, 2009.

Conclusion

Through this RFP, DYCD intends to strengthen its continuum of care for the City RHY population. Services ranging from prevention and education to emergency services to long-term transitional housing will form part of an integrated system that ensures that youth receive the services they need. Through increased outreach efforts to homeless and at-risk youth, and a conscious effort to maintain strong linkages among services, this continuum will continue to play an important role in keeping children in the City healthy, safe, and off the streets.

Comments

Please email comments on the concept paper by July 18, 2008 to cp@dycd.nyc.gov inserting the words "RHY" in the subject line. Written comments may also be mailed to:

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