

**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**  
**Concept Paper**  
**Public Health Call Center**  
**EPIN: 81623Y0397**

1. **Purpose.** The New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is seeking a qualified vendor to provide a call center staffed with clinicians (i.e., registered nurses [RNs], Medical Doctors [MDs]) and non-clinical agents to handle inquiries and questions on health matters from the public and healthcare providers, and, by scaling services, to participate in NYC public health-related initiatives and emergencies. *Clinicians would need to be licensed in New York State (NYS) or be eligible to be licensed in NYS.*
  
2. **Background.** As part of DOHMH's mission to protect and promote the health of all New Yorkers, the Agency intends to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to implement and maintain a public health call center. Such a call center is critical to reducing health disparities by providing equitable access to health information, providing a single resource for both the public and healthcare providers to speak with experienced clinicians for guidance on public health topics, and allowing DOHMH to scale up and down operations as needed based upon outbreaks and public health emergencies.

The COVID-19 public health emergency reinforced the need to provide comprehensive call center services to New Yorkers. During the pandemic, DOHMH received thousands of calls monthly on topics including COVID testing locations, quarantine and isolation orders, vaccination eligibility, and paid sick leave. The ability to answer questions from concerned New Yorkers and healthcare providers was vital to the City's ability to effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis and provide real-time updates on changing public health guidance. DOHMH plans to competitively procure both the technological and staffing services needed to implement and manage a call center able to respond to both the public and healthcare providers in NYC about various public health topics.

3. **Goals and Objectives.** The Agency's goal is to improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers and public health responses by offering information about public health resources and clinical information. The public health call center objectives are to provide the public and healthcare providers with:
  - 3.1 Public health information about infectious and non-infectious diseases and conditions which may include guidance on disease testing, quarantine, vaccination, available treatments, and more.
  - 3.2 Answers from clinicians to questions about isolation, quarantine, risks associated with travel from regions with active outbreaks, indications for vaccination and/or treatment, side-effects, and other issues.

- 3.3 Outreach to vulnerable populations to connect them with important health resources and ensure equitable access to health information.
- 3.4 Assistance in getting access to public health resources and health care services.
- 3.5 Up-to-date information on NYC and NYS public health initiatives as well as local, state, and national health guidelines and restrictions
- 3.6 Clinical consultation for healthcare providers calling for public health guidance

**4. Program Information.** DOHMH anticipates that the contractor would be responsible for the following:

- 4.1 Staffing and maintaining an agile, scalable call center able to receive inbound calls and place outbound calls.
  - 4.1.1 This will include staff able to respond to requests for changes to response protocols and related training, close oversight of protocol compliance on each call and rapid identification and correction of errors, immediate responsiveness to DOHMH call center management requests for identification and review of possibly problematic calls, immediate corrective action plans (including call-backs if appropriate), capacity to search for calls that were not handled according to protocol with a less than one-hour turnaround time, and continuous training and responsiveness to changes announced and requests by DOHMH call center management.
- 4.2 Employing telephone representatives and licensed clinicians with experience in public health matters:
  - 4.2.1 Telephone representatives with prior experience who are trained to use scripts provided by DOHMH to answer common health-related questions.
  - 4.2.2 Representatives would make warm handoffs to clinicians for callers with clinical questions or for those returning a call from a clinician.
- 4.3 Licensed clinicians with experience assessing and treating patients and trained to use algorithms provided by DOHMH to guide responses to callers. Examples of calls the clinicians will handle include:
  - 4.3.1 Managing symptoms and seeking care
  - 4.3.2 Reviewing criteria for NYS Paid Sick Leave and issuing orders
  - 4.3.3 Issuing isolation and quarantine orders to persons with infectious diseases
  - 4.3.4 Answering questions about vaccine safety and side effects
  - 4.3.5 Answering questions about health issues of concern to caregivers
- 4.4 Licensed clinicians with experience providing guidance on a range of public health topics to field phone calls from community providers and provide relevant, medically appropriate guidance.
- 4.5 Operating call center services staffed by reps from 7 am to 11 pm up to seven days a week and by clinicians from 9 am to 9 pm up to seven days a week. The hours of operation may be changed to respond to increased or decreased demand.
- 4.6 DOHMH anticipates that a small number of clinicians may be needed on call during the following hours:
  - 4.6.1 1 am to 9 am and 5 pm to 1 am, Monday through Friday
  - 4.6.2 24 hours a day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays

- 4.7 Providing all technological equipment and applications needed to run a robust call center, including telephonic and computer systems which would allow call center staff to access web portals and webforms for a variety of public health-related purposes (e.g., on-line scheduling at DOHMH clinics, completing registration webforms, determining health service eligibility, etc.).
- 4.8 Verifying credentials/licensing for all clinical staff working at the call center.
- 4.9 Documenting basic demographic information, call dates and times, and other information as requested by DOHMH.
- 4.10 Providing DOHMH with daily and weekly reports summarizing call center activity.
- 4.11 Redirecting calls to other call centers as needed/requested (i.e., 311, Poison Control Center, etc.).
- 4.12 Recording all calls and maintain recordings
- 4.13 Monitoring and addressing nuisance calls and other threats to call center operations (e.g., denial of service attacks).
- 4.14 Managing and assuring the quality of call center operations by monitoring performance and taking actions to improve service quality.

**5. Anticipated Requirements.** DOHMH anticipates that the contractor would have the following experience and/or organizational capabilities:

- 5.1 At least five (5) years of experience providing staffing upon request. This includes hiring and onboarding patient representatives, clinicians, and other qualified, experienced managers, quality assurance specialists, and data managers.
- 5.2 A robust staffing model for operating a call center to handle inquiries from the public or healthcare providers about health matters and participate in NYC public health-related initiatives/emergencies.
- 5.3 The ability to rapidly increase or decrease the number of patient service representatives, clinicians, and other staff upon receiving written notification from DOHMH.
- 5.4 Technological equipment and applications to carry out call center activities including:
  - 5.4.1 Accepting inbound calls from toll-free telephone numbers programmed to direct calls to dedicated staff.
- 5.5 Making outbound calls appearing on caller ID as coming from the "NYC Department of Health"
- 5.6 Managing and modifying call volume as requested by the Agency.
- 5.7 Recording all calls and saving recordings
- 5.8 Using browser-based URLs to make appointments and locate information such as DOHMH protocols, city, state and federal recommendations, and official guidance documents.
- 5.9 The capacity<sup>1</sup> to respond to an estimated 40,000 inbound calls monthly from the public and 8,000 inbound calls from health care providers, facility/workplace officials, and

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<sup>1</sup> These are estimates. Contractors are not guaranteed a minimum or maximum number of hours since needs for services depend upon public health response priorities.

school administrators, and make an estimated 20,000 outbound calls per month for targeted public health initiatives.

- 5.10 Resources required to initiate call center operations and seek reimbursement for services.
- 5.11 The ability to provide services to members of the public who may not themselves have internet access (i.e., scheduling online appointments on their behalf, reviewing online public health tools, and providing other health guidance resources).
- 5.12 Interpreter services to provide services to those with limited English proficiency and services needed to serve those with disabilities (e.g., deaf or hard of hearing Proposed Term of the Contract(s))
- 5.13 DOHMH anticipates that the term of the contract resulting from this RFP will be six (6) years, contingent on the availability of funding and programmatic need. At the time of the release of this Concept Paper, **the anticipated contract start date is January 1, 2025.**

- 6. **Procurement Timeline.** It is anticipated that the RFP will be issued in Fall 2023, with proposals accepted through Winter 2023/2024. Anticipated award decisions will be made in late Winter/Spring 2024.
- 7. **Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals.** DOHMH anticipates that proposals will be evaluated based on proposers' relevant experience and proposed approach to the scope of services; organizational experience and capacity, including proposed staffing plan; and budget.
- 8. **Funding Information.** The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene anticipates awarding one (1) contract. The estimated amount of the agreement is \$100,000,000 over six (6) years.
- 9. **Use of PASSPort and Prequalification.** To respond to this RFP and all other Human/Client Services RFPs, organizations must have an account and an Approved HHS Accelerator PQL qualification status in PASSPort. Proposals and Prequalification applications will ONLY be accepted through PASSPort. If you do not have a PASSPort account or Approved PASSPort HHS Accelerator PQL Application, please visit [nyc.gov/passport](https://nyc.gov/passport) to get started. If you have any questions about your HHS Accelerator PQL status or for assistance with creating a PASSPort account, please contact [help@mocs.nyc.gov](mailto:help@mocs.nyc.gov) .
- 10. **Contact Information/Deadline for Questions/Comments.** Written comments on this Concept Paper are invited through May 26, 2023. Please email [RFP@health.nyc.gov](mailto:RFP@health.nyc.gov) and indicate **Public Health Call Center Concept Paper** in the subject line of the email.