

**Fatherhood Initiative Concept Paper**

**July 14, 2016**

**Purpose**

***DYCD***

***Our Mission****:*

*The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) invests in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.*

***Our Vision:***

*DYCD strives to improve the quality of life of New Yorkers by collaborating with local organizations and investing in the talents and assets of communities to help them, develop, grow and thrive.*

The purpose of this concept paper is to obtain input from stakeholders for a Request for Proposals (RFP) the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) will release in its capacity as the designated Community Action Agency for New York City, the local grantee for federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding. The RFP will be released later this fall through the HHS Accelerator system.

Through the RFP, DYCD will seek appropriately qualified organizations to operate Fatherhood Programs in New York City (City). The goals of the Fatherhood Initiative are to 1) improve fathers’ relationships with their children and 2) increase fathers’ financial and material support for their children.

The proposed program model is informed by DYCD’s mission and vision to alleviate the effects of poverty by drawing on the strengths of individuals and communities, promoting synergy among programs and providers for greater impact, and creating a culture that supports community-building efforts. This concept paper also takes into account the lessons learned from evaluations and over ten years of supporting fatherhood programs. DYCD is adopting this strategic approach to better connect fathers and their families to other DYCD programs and services in their neighborhoods.

**Background**

Father absence is strongly associated with poverty, poor school performance, and risky behaviors. When fathers are actively involved in the lives of their children, the children perform better in school, are more likely to be emotionally secure, and more likely to exhibit self-control and prosocial behavior. In New York City about 33 percent of children under age 18 are being raised in homes without fathers. Black and Latino children are disproportionately represented: 51 percent of Black and 46 percent of Latino children reside in fatherless households as opposed to 11 percent of white children and 8 percent of Asian children. In response, New York City has undertaken a range of activities to promote responsible fatherhood. Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI), fourteen City agencies are collaborating to offer educational, employment, and supportive services to fathers. This collaborative effort reflects Mayor de Blasio’s overarching goal to support families and reduce inequalities for City residents, children, and communities, especially low-income communities of color.

DYCD is committed to enhancing children’s development through programs that encourage fathers to become more personally involved with their children emotionally and, to the extent feasible, financially, and help fathers relate to their co-parents. DYCD’s Fatherhood Programs would address the circumstances confronting noncustodial fathers of any age or status to empower them to establish positive, healthy, supportive relationships with their children. Young fathers and older fathers face unique barriers to full involvement in their children’s lives, but can benefit from interacting with one another, receiving mutual support and encouragement and learning from one another’s experiences. In the case of teenaged fathers, their emotional state is complicated by the need to reconcile the conflicting roles of adolescent and father. Less likely than older men to have graduated from high school, young fathers may be focused on efforts to complete schooling or find entry-level employment. By contrast, older fathers may have long-term hardships such as chronic unemployment or homelessness, compounded by poor health or substance abuse. Both young and older fathers may have difficulty resolving conflicts, which compounds the difficulty of reuniting with family members. Incarceration may result in long-term father absence and diminish employment, health, and housing prospects. Once released from prison, these fathers may have particular difficulty re-establishing positive relationships with their children.

DYCD Fatherhood Programs will give young and older fathers opportunities to interact through joint participation in parenting skills workshops, support groups, and special events. Programs will also assist fathers, including those with prior involvement in the criminal justice system, with achieving employment and education goals and will integrate aspects of conflict management, violence prevention, and other support services to help fathers resolve issues and achieve economic security.

**Funding, Service Options, and Competitions**

The anticipated total annual funding for the Fatherhood Initiative will be $2,986,987. After set-asides for the curriculum, court advocacy services, mediation services, and Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) site visit coaching, $2,786,987 will be available to fund 7-8 programs. The per participant cost will be $1,909.

There will be two service options:

Service Option 1: Fathers aged 18 and over

Service Option 2: Fathers with prior involvement in the criminal justice system

Service Option 1 will have five separate competitions, one for each of the City’s five boroughs. It is anticipated that one contract will be awarded in each competition.

Service Option 2 will have one citywide competition. It is anticipated that two or three awards will be made in Service Option 2.

Proposers may propose for one or both of the service options and for more than one borough in Service Option 1. However, a separate and complete proposal must be submitted for each service option and each borough proposed.

**Payment Structure**

It is anticipated that the payment structure will be based on line-item budget reimbursement. Payments will be processed through the HHS Accelerator Financials system. (For additional information, please see http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hhsaccelerator/financials/financials.page.)

**Target Population and Service Levels**

Programs will serve noncustodial City resident fathers aged 18 and over.

Each contractor would serve a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 210 fathers and their children annually in three cycles of 60-70 participants each. Fathers would receive three months of program services and three months of follow-up services. Fathers may re-enroll in the program after the initial three months of service.

**Experience**

The contractor and key staff would have at least five years of experience within the last ten years providing services to families and at least five years of experience within the last ten years providing parenting services to males 18 years and older.

Key staff (case managers, outreach and retention specialists) would be experienced in providing counseling and advocacy, utilizing appropriate resources and working with City systems such as child support, child welfare, public assistance, education, and housing.

**Program Approach**

Staff would use a strengths-based approach, working in partnership with the participant to build on strengths rather than “fix problems” and work toward goals identified by the participant in an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication. Programs would incorporate principles of positive youth development, family engagement, social and emotional learning, and youth leadership in their approach to program participants who would in turn be able to apply these principles in their relationships with their children.

Case management: The contractor would employ a case management model,[[1]](#footnote-1) which would include the following components: (1) holistic assessment of the participant’s strengths and needs and development of an Individual Service Plan (ISP); (2) implementation of the ISP, i.e., coordinating community resources and working with the participant to meet identified goals; (3) regular review of the ISP to assess whether goals have been met or need to be changed; and (4) follow-up to ensure that the participant has received requested services. When applicable, contractors would utilize ACCESS NYC, the City’s tool to facilitate applications for various benefit programs. Assessment would include a review of the father’s current child support order and visitation/placement arrangements and determination whether either or both need to be modified.

Each participant would be assigned to a primary case manager responsible for working with the father on achieving the goals indicated in his ISP and meeting the two required program outcomes. Three caseworkers would each have an active caseload of 20-24 fathers for each three-month cycle of the program. The caseworkers would make contact with each assigned participant at least once every two weeks. The caseworker would also connect participants to services that address immediate needs related to housing, substance abuse, physical and mental well-being, violent or risky behavior, and other areas that threaten to inhibit full participation and ability to achieve personal and program goals.

**Program Design**

Participant orientation: All participants would receive a one-week orientation to the program at the time of enrollment. Participants would be assessed to determine strengths and needs and to establish long- and short-term goals. In collaboration with program staff, each participant would develop an ISP that would address the six required core areas:

* Parenting skills development
* Effective co-parenting with the child’s guardian
* Employment and education
* Child support
* Child’s education and well-being
* Visitation and placement

Participants would also receive information about other DYCD-funded programs for which they are eligible that could assist in the achievement of their goals. They would also be informed of DYCD-funded services for which their children might be eligible.

Parenting skills development: In each cycle, contractors would be required to provide a parenting skills workshop series of 20 sessions, held twice weekly for ten weeks. Participants would attend all 20 sessions. There would be four concurrent class sections, each with a class roster limited to 18 participants. Classes would be offered during daytime, evening, and weekend hours to accommodate fathers’ schedules. DYCD anticipates mandating the use of a specific parenting curriculum that would include, but may not be limited to, the following topics: values clarification and developing values in children; child physical, social and emotional development; discipline; effective co-parenting with the child’s guardian; relationships/support networks; coping skills; effective communication; noncustodial fathers’ rights and responsibilities; managing conflict and handling anger; job retention skills; race and racism; financial management; substance use and abuse; and nutrition. DYCD expects that, at a minimum, 90 percent of participants would attend at least 80 percent of the sessions.

Support group sessions: Contractors would hold biweekly support group sessions, open to current and past program participants, to address common issues, encourage peer support, and develop relationships with alumni of the program. Programs would seek to recruit volunteer custodial and noncustodial fathers from the community to participate in the support groups, serve as role models, and become mentors to the program participants. DYCD would require that at least 50 percent of enrolled fathers be engaged in mentoring relationships.

Co-parenting: Programs would be required to incorporate activities that include the child’s mother or guardian on a regular basis. The purpose of the activities would be to increase safe and appropriate communication and reduce tension between the co-parents, leading to improved cooperation in the care of the child. Each program would choose the format of the co-parenting activities, which could, for example, be joint workshops with the fathers, inclusion of mothers in case conferencing, or inclusion of mothers in special events. Co-parenting activities would be voluntary and open to all fathers, provided no order of protection or other circumstance precludes such interaction. Another adult involved in the care of the child, for example a grandmother or aunt, could attend in place of mothers who choose not to participate. DYCD would encourage programs to engage at least 30 percent of enrolled fathers in at least one co-parenting activity.

Staffing: The program director would be an LMSW level social worker or other credentialed clinician who would devote 30-50 percent of his/her time to the Fatherhood Program. Staff would also include three full-time case managers and two full-time outreach and retention specialists. The responsibilities of the outreach and retention specialists would be to plan and implement strategies for effective recruitment and retention of participants in the program. The outreach and retention specialists would also recruit both custodial and noncustodial volunteer fathers from the community to participate in support group sessions and other program events (such as play dates held at the program site, Dads Take Your Child to School events, etc.), serve as role models, and become mentors to the program participants. Programs would be required to track the number of hours of participation of the volunteer fathers.

All staff, including any volunteers, would be linguistically and culturally competent and provide services in a manner that is sensitive to the participants’ cultures, life experiences, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Whenever possible, services would be provided in the languages spoken by the participants.

Involvement of alumni: Programs would plan activities to dynamically involve alumni of the program. Possibilities include biweekly support groups, mentoring of current participants, and special family events.

Program facility/program environment: The facility would be appropriate in size and design; compliant with all fire, safety, and ADA requirements; and easily accessible by public transportation. The contractor would ensure that the program environment is friendly and supportive and that all participants are treated with dignity and respect.

Linkages: Service Option 1 programs would be required to form linkages with at least one Beacon and one Cornerstone Community Center in the proposed borough. Service Option 2 programs would be required to form linkages with at least three Beacons or Cornerstone Community Centers throughout the city to ensure that fathers citywide would be recruited. Fatherhood program staff would conduct onsite outreach and recruitment for the Fatherhood Program at the Beacon and Cornerstone locations.

Programs would also be required to form at least seven additional relevant linkages with appropriate public, private, and community service providers, each of which would be for a distinctly different program service. Linkages may be within or outside the proposing organization.

**Additional Services and Referrals**

The following services would be provided by partnering organizations to participants on an as-needed basis.

*Court Advocacy:* Through a separate solicitation, DYCD will fund a vendor to assist fathers with navigating legal issues related to custody, placement, and visitation. The provider would provide counseling to the participants and refer them to an appropriate legal services provider.

*Mediation:* Through a separate solicitation, DYCD will fund a vendor to offer mediation services to the fathers and their co-parents. In cases where parents cannot resolve the conflicts that are affecting their child, the case manager would recommend that they engage in mediation and make a referral to the mediation service provider. Participation by the parents, however, would be voluntary.

*ACS Site Visit Coaching:* For those fathers who have mandated supervised visitation through ACS, the program would collaborate with ACS for site visit coaching. At a safe space at the program or within the neighborhood, ACS staff would coach the father before, during, and after the visit to support the father in improving his interaction with his child(ren).

Additional referrals could include referrals to basic services such as employment services, substance abuse counseling, and health and mental health clinics such as the Department of Health and Mental Health’s Neighborhood Health Action Centers.

Referrals to other DYCD-funded programs could include referrals to Adult Literacy; NDA Housing, Healthy Families, and Immigrant Services programs; Beacon and Cornerstone programs; and for younger fathers to Runaway and Homeless Youth programs; Young Adult Literacy Program; and youth workforce development programs (Out-of-School Youth; Summer Youth Employment Program; Work, Learn, and Grow; Young Adult Internship Program; and NDA Opportunity Youth programs).

It is expected that the contractor would track referrals of participants.

Community Connections/Peer Mentoring: The contractor would be familiar with other resources available within the immediate community and would work to form collaborations and partnerships with entities that would benefit the fathers in their programs. Connections could be with social service, employment, education, cultural, or recreational organizations or venues.

The contractor would connect with community groups that have relationships and credibility with noncustodial fathers. These connections would facilitate the recruitment of volunteer fathers to participate in monthly meetings with program participants in the role of peer mentors.

Programs would also be expected to work collaboratively with other City agencies, as appropriate, including Human Resources Administration (HRA), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Small Business Services, (SBS), Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence, Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), and ACS.

**Program Outcomes**

Contractors would accomplish the two target outcomes listed below. Proposers are expected to project the number of participants who will meet each outcome.

* The father would increase engagement, availability, and responsibility in relationship with his child/children.
* The father would provide material and financial support to his child/children.

Outcomes would be measured by the administration of an outcomes survey, developed and provided by DYCD, that would be administered individually at the end of the orientation period and at regular intervals thereafter, for as long as the participant remains in the program.

In addition to the two required outcomes, programs would track and report on other participant achievements, such as attaining employment.

**Evaluation**

The contractor would be expected to cooperate with any evaluation conducted by DYCD or an outside evaluator.

**Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals and Basis of Award**

Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the RFP. Criteria will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience of the proposer organization and its staff, demonstrated record of achieving required program outcomes, working successfully with other organizations, the quality of the proposed program design, and adequacy of the proposed budget.

Contract award shall be subject to demonstration that the proposer is tax-exempt and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in New York State and determination that it will be a “responsible” prospective contractor, as defined under the City’s Procurement Policy Board Rules Section 2-08.

**Use of HHS Accelerator**

To respond to the forthcoming Fatherhood Initiative RFP and all other client and community services (CCS) RFPs, vendors must first complete and submit an electronic prequalification application using the City’s HHS Accelerator System. HHS Accelerator is a web-based system maintained by the City for use by its human services agencies to manage procurement.

Only organizations with approved HHS Accelerator Business Application and Service Applications for one or more of the following will be eligible to propose.

* Caregiver Support
* Case Management
* Child Care
* Child Support Enforcement
* Community Engagement
* Conflict Resolution/Mediation
* Discharge/Reentry
* Family Planning
* Foster Care Services
* Health Education and Support
* Job/Vocational Training
* Legal Services
* Life Skills
* Mental Health Services
* Outreach
* Parenting Services
* Preventive Services
* Public Health
* Work Readiness

To submit a Business and Service application to become eligible to apply for the Fatherhood Initiative RFP and other CCS RFPs, please visit http://www.nyc.gov/hhsaccelerator.

**Procurement Timeline**

It is anticipated an RFP for this procurement will be released through the HHS Accelerator system in the fall of 2016. The deadline for proposal submission will be approximately one month from the release of the RFP.

**Feedback to Concept Paper**

Responses to this concept paper should be emailed to conceptpaper@dycd.nyc.gov no later than **August 5, 2016**. Enter “Fatherhood Concept Paper” in the subject line.

1. This case management model is guided by DYCD’s *Case Management Standards Toolkit.* <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/NYC_DYCD_Case_Management_Toolkit-2011.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)