

Request For Proposals for Residential Group Care Services

I. INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

A. Statement of Purpose

ChildNet, Inc., Broward County's Community Based Care lead agency (CBC), responsible for local administration of foster care and related services, is soliciting proposals from organizations that have the ability to provide residential group home services for girls or boys ages 13 -17 who have been adjudicated dependent in Broward County and are experiencing emotional and/or behavioral challenges which prevent their successful adjustment to traditional foster home settings. **The deadline for proposals in response to the Request is 12:00 p.m., Monday, September 13, 2010.**

Virtually anyone involved in the local child welfare system is justifiably proud of its, and their, accomplishments during the past seven years. Since the transition to Community Based Care began in April, 2003 the entire system has been transformed. The number of children in the system has been reduced dramatically and it has been done so in the right way, without sacrificing child safety or well-being. The number of children entering care has remained virtually unchanged but the stays of those that do enter are shorter and safer than they have ever been. Young children rarely, if ever, spend significant time in shelters or other congregate care settings and no child ever spends the night in child welfare offices sleeping on furniture or roaming the halls of a barren and decaying intake center. We have more licensed foster homes than we have ever had and they are the homes of incredibly loving and generous people who serve only the number of children that they are appropriately and safely licensed for. We have developed creative new programs to serve both children while in care and to strengthen their families so that they can safely and permanently remain with them after they leave care.

We cannot, however, ever become complacent or imagine that we cannot continue to improve the system. Significant challenges clearly remain. Prominent among them is effectively serving our teenagers. We currently have several programs working diligently to serve older foster care youth and, by traditional standards, they are doing well. Runaway and delinquent behavior among the most challenging foster youth has decreased. Despite a wealth of national literature describing the educational deficits of foster youth, a research study funded by ChildNet and the School Board of Broward County demonstrated that the educational performance of Broward's foster care youth does not differ significantly from that of their peers. The "problem" is that these "successes," by today's standards, are no longer enough. Though delinquent and runaway behavior is less than it was, it still occurs with disturbing frequency, too often seriously jeopardizing the safety of the youth, their peers and the community. Though the school performance of local foster youth is equal to that of their peers, it is, regrettably, equally poor – grade point averages, standardized test scores and graduation rates are, overall, dismal and distressingly substandard.

It is, therefore, a desire to go beyond what might have once been considered acceptable, to extend and expand local successes, which motivates issuance of the current Request For Proposals. ChildNet is seeking proposals that describe programs that will creatively integrate existing services and supports and develop and implement new ones to even more effectively serve the most challenging teens in foster care. This Request is not issued as an indictment of existing programs. Rather, it is an attempt to expand local capacity and capability to effectively meet both the substantial current needs of the target population and to prepare them for their future beyond foster care.

It is especially important that respondents fully comprehend just how challenging the target population is, and how substantial their needs. Typically the youth to be served will be those that meet the definition of “children with extraordinary needs” as described by the Florida legislature. Florida Statute 409.1676 specifically describes the need for comprehensive residential group care services for children who have extraordinary needs, defining a “child with extraordinary needs” as “a dependent child who has serious behavioral problems or who has been determined to be without the options of either reunification with family or adoption.” It further describes these children by indicating that they have at least one of the following risk factors:

1. An adjudication of delinquency and are on conditional release status with the Department of Juvenile Justice.
2. A history of physical aggression or violent behavior toward self or others, animals, or property within the past year.
3. A history of setting fires within the past year.
4. A history of multiple episodes of running away from home or placements within the past year.
5. A history of sexual aggression toward other youth.

ChildNet has several times attempted to very specifically describe the target population. Most recently, a February, 2009 analysis of the 75 teens (41 female, 34 male) then being served by the 10 different residential group care or teen respite (shelter) programs contracted to serve especially challenging Broward foster teens revealed the following indications of just how prevalent and intense their delinquent behavior and academic deficiencies are:

- 86% of the boys and 71% of the girls had a history of juvenile justice involvement. The mean number of “arrests” for the boys was 7, as was the median. For the girls, the mean number of prior “arrests” was 6 and the median was 5. 63% of the boys had at least one felony arrest and 46% of them had multiple felonies. 37% of the girls had at least 1 felony arrest and 29% had multiple felonies. 57% of the boys had been arrested within the past year and 46% of them had an active and open case with the Department of Juvenile Justice. 49% of the girls had been arrested within the past year and 49% also had an open, active DJJ case.
- 32% of the boys had a history of aggression and/or violence and 29% had a history of sexual aggression toward other youth. 37% of the girls had a history of aggression and/or violence and 12% had a history of sexual aggression toward other youth.
- Only 66% of the boys, whose mean age was 16.4 years, were currently attending a Broward County Public School and not a single one had yet advanced beyond the 10th grade. Only 42% of the girls, whose mean age was 16 years, were attending a Broward County Public School and not a single girl either had advanced beyond the 10th grade.
- Only 7 boys had a current Grade Point Average (GPA) and their mean was 1.34. Only 3 girls had a current GPA and their mean was 2.18.
- The mean standardized reading test score among the 15 boys who had one was 256. The mean reading score for the 14 girls who had one was 279. A passing score in reading for Broward County Public School 9th graders was 322, for 10th graders passing was 327.
- The mean standardized math score among the 13 boys who had one was 253. The mean math score for the 14 girls that had one was 278. A passing score for 9th graders was 296, for 10th graders passing was 315.

To more effectively serve precisely this population ChildNet is seeking proposals for programs that will:

1. Provide group care services in as familial and non-institutional a setting as possible while ensuring the security, safety and appropriate supervision of clients;
2. Provide an environment that consistently and effectively attends to and de-escalates aggressive and hostile client behaviors; and
3. Provide clients with a full range of educational, recreational, cultural, and prosocial and independent living skill building activities and opportunities.

B. Proposal Process

1. Proposal must be prepared in compliance with provisions of this RFP. Failure to comply with all provisions of this RFP may result in disqualification of the proposal.
2. Proposals must be received by mail or hand delivered by **12:00 p.m.** local time on **Monday, September 13, 2010. An original plus 8 copies shall be submitted.** Any proposal received after the time stipulated will not be considered.
3. Proposals may be mailed or hand delivered to the following address:

ChildNet
Attention Procurement Manager: Lila Cavasos
313 North State Road 7
Plantation, FL 33317

4. Before submitting a proposal, Applicants may have the opportunity to ask questions. All questions should be directed only to Lila Cavasos at lcavasos@childnet.us. All questions and answers will be addressed via posting on the ChildNet website to be available to all applicants. Questions and answers shall be posted at <http://www.childnet.us/dbwc.asp>. This is the only source of official information regarding this RFP.
5. Services which are not specifically requested in this RFP, but which are necessary to provide the functional capabilities proposed by the Applicant, should be included in the proposal.
6. No allowance will be made after proposals are received for oversight, omission, error or mistake by Applicant.
7. All proposals and any accompanying documents become the property of ChildNet and will not be returned.
8. ChildNet will not be liable in any way for any costs incurred by Applicants in the preparation of their proposals in response to this RFP.
9. ChildNet reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time and for any reason and to issue such clarifications, modifications, and/or amendments as it may deem appropriate.
10. Receipt of proposal materials by ChildNet or submission of a proposal to ChildNet offers no rights against ChildNet nor obligates ChildNet in any manner.
12. ChildNet reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in proposals. Any such waiver shall not modify any remaining RFP requirements or excuse the Applicant from full compliance with the RFP specifications and other contract requirements if the Applicant is awarded the contract.

15. Proposal must be signed by an officer of the Applicant who is legally authorized to obligate the Applicant to a contract.

C. Evaluation of Proposals and Notification of Award(s)

1. ChildNet, at its sole discretion, shall determine whether particular Applicants have the basic qualifications to conduct the desired service for ChildNet. In determining whether an Applicant possesses the basic qualifications to operate, ChildNet may consider the following:
 - Applicant's general reputation for performance and service;
 - Applicant's longevity of service (number of years) and previous experience in operation of social services.
 - Applicant's financial condition.
 - Applicant's status as a formal Network Provider. (*Network Provider Application form and instructions are included as Attachment # 3 of this Request For Proposals*)
2. Proposals will first be examined to eliminate those that are clearly non-responsive to stated requirements. ChildNet's rating committee may take up to 14 days to review all proposals received. The rating committee may then elect to conduct interviews with one or more of the applicants at a date, time, and place to be announced. Recommendations are made based upon the scores from the rating team and consideration of all other relevant factors outlined in the procurement document. Recommendations for contract awards shall be made by the Vice President of Network Development and presented to the CEO.
3. When reviewing responses to the RFP, ChildNet will rate more favorably those proposals that provide sufficient and clear information. Specifically, proposals that demonstrate a thorough understanding of the objectives and goals of the Request and are able to link proposed services to desired outcomes shall be given more favorable ratings. The Narrative Description of Proposed Services must not exceed 10 pages in length. No bonuses will be awarded for those that use all 10 pages nor will deductions be made for those that intelligently and effectively present a proposal in less than 10.
4. ChildNet reserves the right to accept or reject in part or in whole any or all proposals submitted.
5. ChildNet reserves the right to request in writing clarifications or corrections to proposals. Clarifications or corrections shall not alter the Applicant's price contained in the cost proposal.
6. ChildNet reserves the right to negotiate further with the successful Applicant. The content of the RFP and the successful Applicant's proposal(s) will become an integral part of the contract, but may be modified by the provisions of the contract.
7. By submission of proposals pursuant to this RFP, Applicants acknowledge that they are amenable to the inclusion in a contract of any information provided either in response to this RFP or subsequently during the selection process.
8. Award(s) shall be made to the most responsive Applicant(s) whose proposal is/are determined by ChildNet's CEO to be the most advantageous to ChildNet and its clients taking into consideration the terms and conditions set forth in this RFP. A valid and enforceable contract exists when an agreement is fully executed between ChildNet and the Applicant.

9. **Final announcement of award(s) will be posted on ChildNet's website no later than 5:00 pm on October 8, 2010.** Notice of Awards are posted for a minimum of 72 hours. **It is the intent to enter into a contract with an organization(s) during the first quarter of the 2011 calendar year.**
10. All applicants have the right to protest the award. Parties wishing to protest a contract award shall file a notice of protest in writing to ChildNet's CEO within 72 hours after the award is posted on ChildNet's website. The formal written protest shall be filed within 10 days after the date the notice of protest is filed. When protesting a decision, the protesting party must post a bond equal to one percent (1%) of the estimated contract amount. The estimated contract amount shall be based upon the contract price submitted by the protestor. If no contract price was submitted, ChildNet shall provide the estimated contract amount to the protestor within 48 hours of the receipt of the protest notice (excluding Saturdays, Sunday and agency recognized holidays). Failure to file the proper bond at the time of filing the formal written protest will result in a rejection of the protest. In lieu of a bond, ChildNet will accept a cashiers check, official bank check, or money order in the amount of the bond. ChildNet's CEO will provide the protest information to ChildNet's Senior Management committee. This committee will investigate the complaint and issue a written finding and resolution to the protesting party. This protest procedure provides recourse to applicants who believe that their proposal did not receive proper consideration. Applicants entering a protest should be prepared to document specific factors, which put the aggrieved applicant at a competitive disadvantage, and/or document violations of specific sections of state or federal regulations and the procedures set forth in the respective competitive procurement solicitation document. ChildNet reserves the right to refuse to consider an appeal that does not identify specific procedural shortcomings.

II. SPECIFICATIONS OF PROPOSAL

A. General

Each proposal shall include the following five items:

1. Narrative Description of Proposed Services limited to 10 pages, double spaced and in either Times New Roman 12 point or Arial 11 point type.
2. Signature Page – Attachment # 1
3. Unit Cost and Summary form- Attachment # 2
4. Completed Network Provider Application Form- Attachment # 3
5. Budget and Budget Narrative form – Attachment # 4

B. Narrative Description of Proposed Services - Specific Scope of Work

Dependent youth with attachment problems and multiple failed foster care placements often are better served in a group home environment as opposed to a traditional foster home setting. However, to the extent possible, group homes should provide a "normal" environment and atmosphere that is also conducive to preparing youth for successful transitions to a productive future as a community and family member. Locked settings and institutional care are not appropriate for the programs being sought by this Request. Other less restrictive programs such as community group homes can be well suited to fostering positive change in troubled youth. The smaller staff to youth ratios in such residential programs can enable well-trained program staff to foster relationships and provide more individualized services that will support and guide each youth in addressing relevant life issues in a positive and productive manner. Community-based group homes can provide a safe and nurturing environment which allows dependent

youth who are in transition the experiences that will prepare them for the challenges they will face when living as adult members of the community. These are the types of programs contemplated by this Request.

Program services must provide a safe and stable living environment in which very challenging youth with substantial individual needs will be assisted in building skills and strengths sufficient to overcome a potent combination of individual, family and community risk factors such as:

- Individual Youth Risk Factors:
 - History of unstable family life seriously effecting crucial early development;
 - History of trauma;
 - Cognitive deficits; and,
 - Poor emotional/behavioral control;
- Family Risk Factors:
 - Limited problem solving/crisis management skills;
 - Limited support system;
 - Family history of addiction and/ or mental illness;
 - History of ineffective service system engagement and experiencing alienation toward the service system; and,
 - Adult contact with the Criminal Justice System;
- Community Risk Factors:
 - History of poor academic involvement/achievement;
 - Poor attachment to positive community resources;
 - Lack of community resources;
 - Poverty; and,
 - Vulnerability to gang involvement.

It is extremely likely, perhaps even certain, that any local youth referred will have exhibited at least one of the features of the following clinical/behavioral profile:

- Clients have had repeated and/or are at high risk of runaway episodes
- Clients are often determined to be unwilling/unable to comply with their case plan tasks or treatment plans
- Many clients are prescribed psychotropic medications and have been recommended for or previously provided mental health or behavioral health treatment.
- Clients are often active users of alcohol or other drugs.
- Many clients are special education students and/or have significant remedial educational needs.
- High percentage of clients have a history of involvement with Department of Juvenile Justice

ChildNet, of course, welcomes proposals built upon “best practice” and “evidence based” models and approaches. Prior experience, however, suggests that such models and approaches may not truly fit or have demonstrated efficacy with the population that we are actually describing. It is understandable and acceptable, therefore, for a proposal to be based primarily on a service provider’s prior experiences with the target population and the proposed programming. Such proposals, indeed all proposals, still must effectively explain why the specific programming is being proposed and offer convincing arguments and, where possible, data to support expectations of program success.

Proposals shall include a detailed functional description of the services to be provided, how they will be delivered, and how they will meet the goals set forth in this document. ChildNet is seeking creative and thoughtful solutions to challenges that child welfare systems statewide and

nationally have historically struggled with. All proposals should include a discussion of or consider the following:

1. Agency Experience: Describe the agency's experience in providing the proposed services or closely related services. Describe the agency's experience in serving the target population.
2. Target population: Specify the gender and number of clients to be served. Describe how clients will be identified and admitted into the program. Describe specific admission criteria, if any, and how they will be assessed. Provide any evidence or data that suggests that the overall program approach or model will be successful with the target population.
3. Program services: Describe in detail the services that will be provided. Describe the specific service components, activities, resources and supports that will be provided. Provide evidence indicating or suggesting that these specific program services will be successful with the target population. In the absence of actual data or evidence, provide a logical explanation for your expectation that the proposed services will be effective. Consideration should, at least, be given to the following broad areas of activities and services (Outlines, tables of contents or samples of specific curricula that will be used may be submitted as additional attachments to the proposal):
 - a. Cognitive or Behavioral Interventions – Describe the cognitive or behavioral training and/or management strategies that will be used to address anti-social or criminal attitudes, beliefs and behavior; anger problems; and poor decision-making.
 - b. Positive Peer Relationship Development - Describe how positive peer relationships will be encouraged and developed by and among the youth.
 - c. Social Skills Building - Describe social skills building activities to be utilized with the target population.
 - d. Leisure Time Management - Describe how the constructive use of leisure time will be encouraged, established and supported.
 - e. Independent Living Skills and Vocational and/or Educational Exploration and Planning – Describe activities that will be used to assist the youth with preparing for, identifying and accessing future education and employment opportunities.
 - f. Transition Planning - Describe how a transition plan will be developed for each youth in preparation for graduation from the program. Address the development and access of relationships and supports within the community to which the youth will be transitioning.
4. Implementation Plan and Operational Readiness: Outline timelines and critical milestones associated with the access and licensing of the group home facility and implementation of the program. Provide an overview regarding the property to be utilized that includes its precise location and current status, its availability to the proposer, the extent to which it needs to be renovated or remodeled, its compliance with all relevant local and state zoning and usage regulations and restrictions, and the timeline anticipated for its licensure. Also describe plans and provide timelines for hiring and pre-service training of staff.
5. Assessment: Describe any and all assessments that will be used to identify client needs and strengths, direct service planning and evaluate progress. Also indicate the frequency with which the assessments will be completed, reviewed and how they will be used to improve client outcomes.
6. Cultural competence: Describe specific efforts to identify, acknowledge and effectively consider the client's culture in the provision of services.

7. Transportation: Describe methods of and access to transportation that will be used to ensure the youth's regular and consistent attendance at school, work, medical appointments and community and recreational activities. Also consider emergency needs.
8. Service coordination and information sharing: Describe planned efforts to ensure that proposed program services are integrated with the full array of local health, education and human services that may be available and provided to the youth currently and in the future.
9. Staffing: Include a detailed description of proposed staffing patterns. Include each different position's responsibilities and the educational and work experience requirements for each position. Additionally, describe what efforts will be made to recruit staff well-suited to serving the target population and to reduce turnover among those who will work directly with the youth. Also describe any specific in-service training topics and curricula that are planned. Please note that all employees of the selected agency who will be providing services under this subcontract shall be required to undergo Level 2 background screening as a condition of employment. The requirements set forth in Chapter 435; F.S. pursuant to Level 2 employment screening must be met.
10. Quality Improvement: Describe a plan for regularly evaluating and enhancing program quality in terms of limiting each of the following: number of runaways, number of safety concerns/critical incidents, number of arrests or criminal violations, and number of days absent or suspended from school.
11. Outcome measurement: List at least three proposed outcome measures involving variables other than those described immediately above that will demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed programming. Describe how the necessary data will be gathered to actually measure the outcomes. Include proposed timeframes for measuring and reporting outcome progress. Describe and/or demonstrate how the outcome measurement information and data will be presented to ChildNet. If data gathering will require the efforts of other agencies or entities, present proof of their willingness to assist or describe the efforts that have been made to ensure their cooperation.

C. Budget and Method of Payment for Proposed Services

Applicants must define the unit of service for their proposal, identify the cost of providing each unit, and indicate how many of each unit will be provided for the contract period. This unit cost and summary shall be documented on Attachment # 2. Additionally, all proposals must include a budget summary and budget narrative documented on Attachment # 4. The narrative section of the budget should be as specific as possible with clear justification of all expenses.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION AND SUBCONTRACT CRITERIA

A. Contract Formation

This is a Request For Proposal only. Proposals will be treated as offers to enter into a contract with ChildNet. The written acceptance of the Applicant's Proposal by ChildNet shall constitute a contract, pending execution of a formal written contract satisfactory to both the ChildNet and the Contractor.

B. Length of Contract

ChildNet intends to enter into a multi-year contract with the subcontractor on or before March 1st, 2011 which will expire on June 30, 2013. There will be two additional 12 month renewal

periods that will ultimately expire on June 30, 2015. Renewals will be contingent upon the continuing satisfactory performance by the Network Provider.

C. Subcontract Criteria

If awarded a contract, Applicant(s) must be able to comply with all sections of ChildNet’s standard core contract utilized with Network Providers. Specific criteria pertaining to insurance requirements, indemnification, employee background screening, and other legal and regulatory details are contained within the core contract. The standard core contract is Attachment # 5 of this Request For Proposal.

D. Conflict of Interest

The Applicant shall disclose and describe on Attachment # 1 any business, financial, pecuniary or familial relationship existing between the Applicant (or any officer, agent, or employee of the Applicant) and any officer, employee, agent or board member of ChildNet.

E. Taxes

ChildNet is exempt from all federal, state and local taxes. ChildNet shall not be responsible for any taxes that are imposed on the Applicant. Furthermore, the Applicant understands that it cannot claim exemption from taxes by virtue of any exemption that is provided to ChildNet.

III. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1	Signature Page
Attachment #2	Unit Cost Summary
Attachment #3	Network Provider Application
Attachment #4	Budget and Budget Narrative
Attachment #5	Network Provider Standard Core Contract