



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

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JEANNE B. MULLGRAV
Commissioner

August 26, 2005

Dear Community Member:

Prior to the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for preventive, residential and non-residential Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) services, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has developed a Concept Paper that presents the agency's approach to this important field. Programs funded under this RFP will meet or exceed standards established by the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). We invite your review and comment.

Over the past several months, DYCD has conducted focus groups and consulted with a range of providers, advocates, and experts to elicit input on best practices in the field of RHY services. DYCD has attempted to capture much of that input in the RHY Concept Paper. Constructive feedback will continue to be an essential feature of this planning process as we develop and finalize the upcoming Runaway and Homeless Youth Services RFP. I thank you for your careful consideration of this Concept Paper, and look forward to your comments.

Please send your comments, in writing, to the attention of:

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Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 16th, 2005.

The RHY Concept Paper will be posted on our website at www.nyc.gov/dycd. I urge you to distribute this Concept Paper to all who are interested in runaway and homeless youth services, and to share with us your best thoughts regarding this critically important solicitation.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav

Enclosure

The Department of Youth and Community Development Residential and Non-Residential Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

Concept Paper – August 26, 2005

Youth become homeless in New York City for a variety of reasons. They run away from homes where they may have been subjected to abuse or sexual exploitation, or exposed to domestic violence or substance abusing parents. Some are rejected because of sexual orientation, pregnancy, problems at school, or issues with drugs and alcohol. Youth leaving detention placements or those aging out of foster care may also find themselves homeless. While living on the streets of New York City, these youth are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including violence and prostitution. Through an upcoming Request for Proposals (RFP), the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) seeks proposals from qualified not-for-profit organizations to provide services to the City's runaway and homeless youth (RHY) population, as well as to youth at risk of becoming homeless, up to and including age 20.

As the Youth Bureau for New York City, DYCD supports an integrated and coordinated system of care for the City's RHY population. DYCD seeks to establish a "continuum of care" model for runaway and homeless youth that comprises a broad range of services. The upcoming RFP will seek appropriately qualified vendors to provide Crisis Shelters, Transitional Independent Living Programs, and services through a new "Community Connections Initiative," which will include a drop-in center in each borough, a citywide street outreach program, and borough-based coordinators to connect youth to local resources.¹ Together, these programs will provide an effective, integrated network of services for youth in need. RHY program contractors will also maintain linkages to facilitate referrals to a variety of other appropriate services, and will collaborate with other 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 New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and the New York Police Department (NYPD).

In keeping with the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) of 1978 and current New York State RHYA regulations, DYCD will fund programs that are designed to protect runaway and homeless youth and, whenever possible, reunite them with their families. In cases where reunification is not possible, these programs will also be designed to help youth progress from crisis and transitional care to independent living. The principles of positive youth development will be the basis for all aspects of the programs and settings offered by both residential and non-residential RHY service providers. These principles include: ensuring the safety, engagement, and empowerment of youth; providing positive adult role models; setting high expectations; and offering opportunities to develop skills and competencies. Program activities and experiences will be designed to assist youth in becoming healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

¹ An RHY hotline will be maintained by DYCD, with referral services available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, and will not be included in this RFP.

While specific programs to address the needs of certain sub-populations will be considered, the environment for all RHY program services should be safe and welcoming 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, RHY program staff must be appropriately trained and experienced in working with vulnerable youth and their families, and sensitive to the diverse cultures and backgrounds of the populations to be served. All youth should be made aware of both their rights and responsibilities with regard to services.

This RFP will fund three service options:

- a Community Connections Initiative, which will include six (6) drop-in centers and one citywide street outreach program
- up to six (6) crisis shelters with an overall capacity of up to 75 beds
- up to six (6) transitional independent living programs, one of which will be designed to serve LGBTQ youth and another to serve pregnant and parenting youth. Overall capacity will be up to 120 beds.

Service Option I: Community Connections Initiative

The new Community Connections Initiative (CCI) will provide drop-in center facilities in each of the five boroughs, as well as a citywide street outreach program. Each center will be staffed by a program director and at least one “Community Connections Coordinator,” who will be responsible for establishing linkages with local resources. The initiative will comprise the three components described below.

Borough-based Drop-In Centers

DYCD will fund one drop-in center in each borough, where homeless and at-risk youth and their families can receive counseling, information, mediation and referrals to local resources. The Manhattan Drop-In Center will be enhanced with an additional “satellite center” in another area of the borough, for a total of six (6) centers citywide.

Each drop-in center will be easily accessible via public transportation and will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., 7 days a week. Drop-in center services will include, but not be limited to: crisis intervention, assessment and counseling services, mediation, life skills and work readiness counseling, and referrals and transportation to residential programs or other appropriate agencies. The centers will also provide resource rooms with informational literature on relevant topics and services. Each drop-in center will be staffed by a full-time director with a master’s degree in social work or a related area and at least two years of supervisory experience.

Street Outreach

The Manhattan Drop-In Center will be required to provide a citywide Street Outreach Program, employing van services and outreach workers to engage youth in the street and in locations where runaway and homeless youth congregate in all boroughs. By developing rapport with

youth in the streets, the outreach workers can provide information about available services directly to the RHY population. Street Outreach will serve as one of the main points of entry to DYCD's RHY system. Youth and their families who are in need of RHY services will be referred to the drop-in centers or other appropriate facilities. Street Outreach workers will provide services 7 days per week, year round, and will be supervised by the Director of the Manhattan Drop-In Center.

Community Connections Coordinators

Each drop-in center will also be staffed with one or more "Community Connections Coordinators" who, under the supervision of the drop-in center's director, will be responsible for helping youth and families to access appropriate services and resources within their neighborhoods. The Coordinators will create direct linkages and relationships with City agencies, schools, and RHY service providers to form an interlocking network of services for this population. These linkages will include ACS, DOE, DOHMH, DHS, DJJ, DOP, OCFS, and NYPD.

In each borough, funding for one (1) or two (2) Community Connections Coordinators will be available. Coordinators will provide information and referrals to youth and act as neighborhood-based advocates for runaway and homeless and at-risk youth. The Coordinators will be responsible for compiling an inventory of existing services within the community for youth at risk of becoming homeless. They will also identify gaps in local services for the RHY population and their families, and will provide referrals accordingly. Coordinators will ensure that the drop-in centers and other RHY resources are visible and well known within the community, and help connect service providers to the youth and families who need them. In addition, Coordinators will offer prevention and education workshops at schools and other appropriate settings. These workshops will raise awareness of risk factors and other issues related to youth homelessness. Community Connections Coordinators will be individuals with a four-year degree in social work or a related area, as well as four or more years of experience working with youth.

Based on an analysis of need for preventive services, DYCD has identified community districts (CDs) in each borough that will be considered "target areas" for the Community Connections Coordinators' services.² The target CDs for each borough are:

- 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)
- Staten Island:* CD1 (St. George/Stapleton)

² Target communities were selected based on an analysis of data related to risk factors, including: youth aging out of foster care; youth not in school, not a high school graduate, and not in the labor force; and youth leaving OCFS rehabilitative facilities. Selected communities ranked in the top 3 borough-wide for one or more of these factors.

Other target community districts will be considered based on justification from proposers. With the exception of Staten Island, contractors should demonstrate the ability to serve at least two (2) community districts.

The anticipated maximum available annual funding for six (6) drop-in centers, including nine (9) Community Connections Coordinators and one (1) street outreach program, is \$2,800,000, distributed as follows:

- Manhattan:* \$1,300,000 for one (1) main drop-in center, one (1) satellite drop-in center, one (1) citywide street outreach program, and two (2) Community Connections Coordinators
- Brooklyn:* \$400,000 for one (1) drop-in center and two (2) Community Connections Coordinators
- Bronx:* \$400,000 for one (1) drop-in center and two (2) Community Connections Coordinators
- Queens:* \$400,000 for one (1) drop-in center and two (2) Community Connections Coordinators
- Staten Island:* \$300,000 for one (1) drop-in center and one (1) Community Connections Coordinator

Service Option II: Crisis Shelters

Funding will be available for up to 75 beds in up to six (6) Crisis Shelters located throughout the City. These voluntary, short-term residential programs are meant to provide emergency shelter and services to youth, with the goal of either reuniting them with their families or finding appropriate long-term placements.

Each crisis shelter will be co-ed and have a minimum capacity of ten (10) and a maximum of twenty (20) youth (unless a waiver is obtained from OCFS to allow for additional beds). Youth in crisis shelters are housed on a short-term basis for up to 30 days. The shelters will operate and provide staff supervision 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, providing a safe environment for all youth. Crisis shelters may serve youth who are **either:** a) all under age 18, **or** b) between the ages of 16 and 20 (inclusive). Each shelter will employ a full-time program director and a full-time counselor. Either the director or the counselor will have a master's degree in social work or a related field and at least two years of experience.

Crisis shelter programs will provide shelter, food, clothing, individual and group counseling, and transportation. They will also provide, either directly or through written service agreements: medical and mental health care, dental care, and legal assistance, as well as other appropriate services for youth and their families. Programs must also create an individual service plan for each youth admitted to the shelter, which identifies the immediate needs of the youth and the appropriate course of action. The crisis shelters will work closely with the drop-in centers, the Street Outreach Program and the Community Connections Coordinators, who will help to identify those youth in need of emergency shelter. They will also refer youth in need of long-term placement to the Transitional Independent Living programs.

In addition, crisis shelters may be required to provide respite services for youth upon referrals from Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and parental consent. Such respite will include family counseling and will not exceed 30 days.

The anticipated maximum available annual funding for up to 75 beds in up to six (6) crisis shelters is \$1,500,000.

Service Option III: Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILs)

Transitional Independent Living programs (TILs) provide transitional housing to runaway and homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 20 (inclusive), and their dependent children, for up to 18 months. The primary goal of the TIL programs is to equip youth for whom family reunification is not possible with the skills to live independently, to support themselves, and to further their educational and career goals. TIL residents live in a cooperative housing situation where they have maximum responsibility for their daily lives, but also have on-site access to counseling and support services. Of the six (6) TILs to be funded, one will be designed to address the specific needs of LGBTQ youth, and another to address the needs of pregnant and parenting youth.

Youth will be eligible to enter a TIL program only through an appropriate referral from a DYCD crisis shelter or other approved residential program, such as a DJJ or OCFS facility. The referring facility will provide the TIL with a comprehensive assessment of the youth and a recommendation for admission. TILs will then assess the potential residents to determine whether they are a good fit for the program.

The minimum capacity for each TIL will be ten (10) youth, and the maximum will be twenty (20) (unless a waiver is obtained from OCFS to allow for additional beds). All programs will operate and provide staff supervision 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The programs will provide shelter, food, clothing, and individual and group counseling. They will also provide, either directly or through written agreements with outside providers, medical/mental health, legal and educational services. They will teach independent living skills through activities on such topics as problem solving, decision-making, communication, employment, effective use of leisure time, personal hygiene, health maintenance, housekeeping, and financial management. As TIL programs are voluntary, all residents will be expected to commit to a set of program requirements in order to maintain residence in a TIL program, including curfews, education or job requirements, and behavioral standards. For each youth in the program, TILs will provide an in-depth skills assessment and create an individual service plan, which will be reviewed every 60 days.

The anticipated maximum available annual funding for six (6) TIL programs is \$3,600,000.

Minimum Qualification Requirements

DYCD anticipates the following Minimum Qualification Requirements for the upcoming RFP, pursuant to New York regulations. The proposer must be incorporated as a private, not-for-profit organization in New York State. In the case of proposals for residential facilities, proposers must

be certified, or have filed for certification³ to operate a residential facility as defined by New York State 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 awarding of contracts. DYCD will not release funds to any proposer awarded a contract until OCFS certification has been secured.

Monitoring and Performance Reporting Requirements

DYCD will conduct regular site visits to all RHY programs. These visits will include inspection of the program's physical plant, staffing schedules, personnel records and staff training documentation, as well as program operation, provision of services, youth case records and other program requirements to ensure compliance with programs' DYCD contracts and State certification regulations. Providers will be required to submit comprehensive statistical data as requested by DYCD, including youth served, demographics, utilization rates, and referrals.

Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP and 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 Request for Proposals will be three (3) years, with an option to renew for up to three (3) additional years.

Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that the procurement timeline for the RHY Request for Proposals will be as follows:

RFP issuance date:	Mid-October 2005
Proposal submission deadline:	Mid-November 2005
Expected award announcement:	Mid-March 2006
Start date for new contracts:	July 1, 2006

Conclusion

Through this RFP, DYCD intends to create a true continuum of care for the City's RHY population. Services ranging from prevention and education to emergency services to long-term transitional housing will be connected within an integrated system that ensures that youth receive the services they need. Through increased efforts to reach out to homeless and at-risk youth, and a conscious effort to maintain strong linkages among services, this continuum will play an important role in keeping New York City's children healthy, safe, and off the streets.

³ The certification process can take several months to complete. New agencies that are responding to the RFP will be required to submit a completed OCFS Report of Inquiry form to DYCD to begin the certification process.

Comments

Please submit any comments on this Concept Paper or the anticipated RFP, in writing, by Friday, September 16, 2005 at 5 PM to the attention of:

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