



# Request for Qualifications

## Forensic Psychological and/or Psychiatric Evaluators

**RFQ Posting:** Thursday, July 21, 2016

**Pre-Application Phone Conferences:** Thursday, August 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., and Wednesday, February 15, at 1 p.m.

**Deadline for Questions:** Five business days prior to the next submission deadline to ensure answer by the deadline.

**Submission Deadlines:** Applications will be reviewed biannually, with the deadline for submission for review on September 1 and March 1 of each year.

Allegheny County Department of Human Services  
One Smithfield Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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## Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following capitalized words are defined as follows for the purposes of this RFQ:

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Qualified Applicant to provide the Contract Services
2. Applicant: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a response to this RFQ in an effort to become the Qualified Applicant(s)
3. Application: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFQ
4. Competency Evaluation: An evaluation that assesses 1) whether a juvenile has sufficient present ability to consult with his or her lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and 2) whether the juvenile has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him or her
5. Contract Services: The specific services which the Qualified Applicant agrees to provide to the County in response to this RFQ as more particularly described in the Scope of Services in the Agreement
6. Court: Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County Family Division (Children's Court, Adult Division and/or Juvenile Probation)
7. Custody Cases: Private litigation filed by a parent or party that results in legal proceedings in the Court to determine the child's time with each party and other important parenting considerations that reflect the best interests of the child
8. CYF: [Allegheny County Department of Human Services] Office of Children, Youth and Families, the County's child welfare office
9. Delinquency Cases: Legal proceedings of the Court that involve: 1) juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 who have allegedly committed a delinquent act and who are in need of treatment and rehabilitation or supervision by the Court or 2) persons under the age of 21 who have committed a delinquent act before reaching the age of 18
10. Delinquent Act: An act, in violation of a law, that would be a crime if committed by an adult
11. Dependency Cases: Legal proceedings of the Court involving:
  - a. Children under the age of 18 who are without proper parental care or control, subsistence or education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental or emotional health or morals
  - b. Children who have been placed for care or adoption in violation of law
  - c. Children who have been abandoned by their parents, guardian or other custodian
  - d. Children who are without a parent, guardian or legal custodian
  - e. Children who are habitually and without justification truant from school while being subject to compulsory school attendance
  - f. Children who have committed a specific act or acts of habitual disobedience of the reasonable lawful commands of their parent, guardian or other custodian and who are ungovernable and found to be in need of care, treatment or supervision
  - g. Children under the age of 10 who have committed a delinquent act
  - h. Children who have been formerly adjudicated dependent and are under the jurisdiction of the court and commit an act which is defined as ungovernable
  - i. Children who have been referred for an informal adjustment of a delinquent act and who commit an act which is defined as ungovernable

- j. Children who are born to a parent whose parental rights with regard to another child have been involuntarily terminated within three years immediately preceding the date of birth of the subsequent child and the conduct of the parent poses a risk to the health, safety or welfare of the children
  - k. Individuals who were adjudicated dependent before reaching the age of 18 years and who, after reaching the age of 18 years, request the court to retain jurisdiction. In no event shall a person remain under the jurisdiction of the court beyond the age of 21 years.
12. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services. More information about DHS is available at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx>
  13. Family Division: The Division of the Fifth Judicial District of Allegheny County that handles divorce, child and spousal support, equitable distribution of property, child custody, protection from abuse, delinquency, dependency, termination of parental rights and adoption cases. More information about the Family Division is available at <https://www.alleghenycourts.us/family/>
  14. Forensic Evaluation: The neutral and objective investigation of facts and evidence in a structured manner in anticipation of a proceeding or the consideration of a specific legal question in connection with a court proceeding (e.g., competency, capacity, ability, mental status, intellectual functioning). Investigations may include clinical and other interviews, collection of written documentation including existing records, psychosocial assessment, psychological testing, psychiatric evaluation, etc., depending upon the nature of the legal question(s) at hand.
  15. HSAO: Human Services Administration Organization
  16. Interactional Assessment: An assessment protocol grounded in attachment, child development and family systems theories wherein the evaluator joins the family and interviews the parent(s) and/or caregiver(s), beginning with the children present. The assessment systematically explores parental philosophies, attitudes and beliefs about child-rearing.
  17. OMHSAS: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare) Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
  18. Permanency: The standard of practice, based on the particular needs and best interests of the child, designed to provide the child with continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime family relationships. The hierarchy of permanency goals for children is: 1) reunification; 2) adoption; 3) permanent legal custodianship; 4) permanent placement with a fit and willing relative and; 5) another planned permanent living arrangement (considered only when the other four options are ruled out).
  19. Qualified Applicant(s): The Applicants(s) qualified by the County and the Court to provide the Contract Services
  20. RFQ: Request for Qualifications
  21. Single Provider: A sole group or organizational practice with multiple practitioners qualified to schedule and complete required evaluations and reports in a timely manner. The Single Provider has a centralized intake coordinator and an administrative staff with considerable experience with insurance and third party billing as well as the preparation of statistical reports.
  22. TPR: Termination of Parental Rights. The act of severing all legal and custodial ties between a child and a parent

## **The Purpose**

### ***What we need***

Allegheny County, on behalf of its Department of Human Services (DHS) child welfare office (the Office of Children, Youth and Families, or CYF), and the Fifth Judicial District of Allegheny County, Family Division (Children's Court, Adult Division and/or Juvenile Probation) (henceforth referred to as the Court), are seeking licensed and credentialed Qualified Applicants to conduct forensic psychological and/or psychiatric evaluations of children and families involved in dependency, delinquency and custody proceedings. A forensic psychological and/or psychiatric evaluation (henceforth referred to as a Forensic Evaluation) is defined as the neutral and objective investigation of facts and evidence in a structured manner in anticipation of a proceeding or the consideration of a specific legal question in connection to a court proceeding. A Forensic Evaluation may include clinical and other related interviews and collection of written or oral collateral information including existing records, psychosocial assessment, other psychological testing and/or psychiatric evaluation, depending on the nature of the legal question at hand.

Applicants may be individuals or a group practice with multiple practitioners (henceforth referred to as a Single Provider). Applicants may have expertise in one, two or all three areas: Dependency Cases, Delinquency Cases and Custody Cases. Qualified Applicants will be eligible to be selected to perform Forensic Evaluations pursuant to referrals from either the Court or DHS.

The majority of referrals to Qualified Applicants will be for Forensic Evaluations pursuant to a Court order or a Court-related need. DHS and the Court anticipate the need for approximately 2,000 Forensic Evaluations, inclusive of all three case types, each year. Qualified Applicants will not be guaranteed a set number of forensic evaluations. Evaluations will be assigned based on the designated case type, expertise in any specialized subject area, availability to complete the evaluation and submit a report in a timely fashion and geography and hours of operation that accommodate the family's needs.

The County intends to qualify one or more Applicant(s) through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Current providers are not pre-qualified and must submit a Proposal and be qualified in order to continue performing Forensic Evaluations for the entities issuing this solicitation.

# Section 1: Key Information

## 1.1 General Information

- a. This RFQ is a solicitation to individuals, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations or businesses (Applicants) to submit an Application to perform the services as described in *Section 3.1: Scope*. Applicants must have the ability to meet the identified needs with the qualifications specified in this RFQ.
- b. The issuance of this RFQ does not obligate the County to enter into an Agreement with any Applicants.

## 1.2 Timeline

- a. Pre-Application Phone Conferences to be held on Thursday, August 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., and Wednesday, February 15, 2017, at 1 p.m.
- b. Deadline for Applicants to Submit Questions: Five business days prior to the next submission deadline to ensure that an answer is provided by the deadline (e.g., to ensure that your question is answered by September 1, submit your question five business days prior to September 1).
- c. Application Submission: Applications may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed biannually. Biannual deadlines are 3 p.m. EST on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and March.
- d. The evaluation process will occur over the two months following the submission deadline. Applicants will be notified of their selection status at the beginning of the third month (e.g., Applications received for the September deadline will be evaluated during October and November. Applicants will be notified of their selection status in December).

## 1.3 How to Contact DHS

- a. All inquiries and questions must be submitted via email to [DHSProposals@allegHENYcounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@allegHENYcounty.us)
- b. All information about the RFQ, including answers to questions, changes and clarifications will be posted at our Active Solicitations website at [www.allegHENYcounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/dhs/solicitations)
- c. Please be sure to check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information, or changes to the RFQ or the RFQ process.

## 1.4 Submitting Your Application

- a. This RFQ provides detailed information about the Application and Applicant requirements, the evaluation process, and how to develop your Application.
- b. Please use the Response Form to develop your Application. Type your responses to each requested item directly into the Response Form. It is available at our Active Solicitations website with the RFQ announcement at [www.allegHENYcounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- c. Applicants interested in submitting an Application may call into a voluntary Pre-Application Phone Conference where they may ask questions about the RFQ and Application process.

- In some cases, preliminary answers will be provided orally at the conference. DHS will post final, definitive answers to all questions from the conference on the DHS Solicitations webpage by the end of the week following the conference.
  - Pre-Application Phone Conferences will be held on Thursday, August 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., and Wednesday, February 15, 2017, at 1 p.m.
  - Interested Applicants should call (866)770-8629 and use passcode 4890998 to log into the Pre-Application Phone Conference.
- d. Applicants must submit a complete Application, which includes the following attachments that are available on our Active Solicitations website:
- Response Form
  - MWDBE documents
  - Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
  - W-9
  - Proof of Medical Malpractice Insurance
  - Proof of practicing license in good standing
  - Proof of Act 33/34 clearances
  - Single Provider Applicants must also submit an Audited Financial Report
- e. Please do not send any attachments other than those listed above and on the Response Form.
- f. Please take time to review and understand the RFQ in its entirety including:
- The requirements (see *Section 3: Requirements*)
  - The evaluation process (see *Section 4: The Evaluation Process*)
- g. Make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within any word counts specified in the Response Form.
- h. Applications must be submitted electronically to [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us) no later than 3:00 p.m. EST on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September or March to be considered for review.**
- i. Please make sure to get your Application in before the deadline! If your Application is late, it will not be considered until the next evaluation period.
- j. You will receive an email when your Application is received. If you do not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting your Application, please contact [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us)

## 1.5 Other Information

- a. Any Agreement originating from this RFQ is subject to all of the Terms and Conditions specified in *Section 6: Contract Information*.
- b. Applicants are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of an Application.
- c. Applications become the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement between the Applicant and the County.
- d. The Qualified Application(s) will be posted online in the DHS Solicitations Archive after contract execution.

## Section 2: Background

### 2.1 About Forensic Evaluations in Child Welfare

Forensic Evaluations are conducted in Dependency, Delinquency and Custody Cases as described below.

### **Dependency Cases**

Dependency Cases primarily involve neglected and/or abused children. DHS and the Court want to avoid subjecting children and families to duplicative, unnecessary or redundant evaluations. However, there are times when Court-ordered Forensic Evaluations are necessary to determine the most appropriate course of action. The primary goal under Pennsylvania law is to preserve families by identifying the problems that have led to the adjudication of dependency. DHS and the Court offer services to the family that allow the children to remain in the home or to be safely returned to the home if they have been removed from the care of a parent or guardian. If it is not possible to safely return the children to the parents due to abuse or neglect, DHS and the Court try to find a permanent home for the children through adoption, permanent legal custodianship, placement with a fit and willing relative, or long-term foster care. The children may be placed with relatives or others qualified to accept children into their homes.

Forensic Evaluations for Dependency Cases assist the Court reach an appropriate disposition. They also assist the Court and DHS in placement and permanency planning for children by:

- Providing an objective assessment of the contributing variables leading to the dependency petition
- Determining the specific services needed for the children or the parent(s) so that the children may remain or, in the case of removal, may return safely to the parent(s)
- Informing the Court's understanding regarding prognosis for change
- (Specifically related to Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings), assisting the Court in reaching a decision about parental rights that serves the best interest, needs and welfare of the children

Forensic Evaluations for Dependency Cases include, but are not limited to, individual psychological or cognitive evaluations of parents and/or identified children; developmental assessments of children; evaluations to assess the bond and relationship between the children and parents or between the children and foster parents; evaluations to assess the capacity to parent; and, occasionally, sex offender risk assessments.

DHS and the Court anticipate the need for approximately 1,600 Forensic Evaluations for Dependency Cases each year.

### **Delinquency Cases**

Delinquency Cases involve children or youth who have allegedly committed a Delinquent Act, in violation of a law, that would be a crime if committed by an adult. A delinquent child is one who has committed a Delinquent Act and is in need of treatment and rehabilitation or supervision by the Court. Forensic Evaluations for Delinquency Cases assist the Court in mental health treatment and/or mental health placement planning, competency determinations and, occasionally, assessments to determine risk for future sexual offenses or other anti-social or aggressive behaviors. They are not intended to recommend interventions related to criminogenic needs identified by the Probation Department.



Sometimes a Forensic Evaluation is ordered to assist the Court in determining whether a Delinquency Case should be transferred to criminal court. In these cases, the Court is responsible for determining whether the transfer of the case would serve the public interest, after considering a number of factors including the child's mental capacity and whether the child is amenable to treatment, supervision and rehabilitation as a juvenile. In other instances, a Forensic Evaluation for a Delinquency Case may include a Competency Evaluation to assess whether a juvenile has sufficient ability to consult with his or her lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and whether the juvenile has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him or her.

DHS and the Court estimate there will be approximately 300 Forensic Evaluations for Delinquency Cases each year.

### **Custody Cases**

Custody Case Forensic Evaluations assist the Court determine each parent or party's custodial time and decision-making ability/authority for a child. Forensic Evaluations conducted for Custody Cases may result in recommendations about:

- Primary or shared custody
- Visitation and/or parenting time
- Decision-making
- Counseling for the family, parent, party and/or child
- Mental health and/or drug and alcohol treatment for the parent, party and/or child
- Safety planning in cases of abuse and/or domestic violence
- Reunification considerations
- Communication between parents or parties

Forensic Evaluations for Custody Cases may include, but are not limited to: assessments of all parents and parties involved; child interviews; psychological testing; child-parent observations; assessments of evaluations done by other professionals; consideration of verbal or written collateral information or sources; written reports; and testimony and review of Court records. Some Custody Cases may involve an Interactional Assessment, where a Qualified Applicant interviews the parent(s) and/or caregiver(s), beginning with the children present. In an Interactional Assessment, parents are encouraged to share their ideas about their involvement with social services, the purpose of the assessment and any concerns they may have about their children.

DHS and the Court anticipate the need for approximately 100 Forensic Evaluations for Custody Cases each year.

## **Section 3: Requirements**

### **3.1 Scope**

In 2011, Allegheny County entered into a contract with one Single Provider on an exclusive basis for Court-ordered Forensic Evaluations in Dependency, Delinquency and Custody Cases. Now, the County is soliciting Applications from one or more Qualified Applicants (doctoral-level licensed psychologists and board-certified psychiatrists) to provide Forensic Evaluation services on an as-needed basis. Qualified

Applicants may be individuals or Single Providers with expertise in one or more of the case areas.<sup>1</sup> Single Providers must have a centralized intake coordination function. All Applicants must have experience billing insurance and other third party billing. Qualified Applicants must have the capacity to receive referrals through the County's information system (i.e., Key Information and Demographic System, or KIDS). Qualified Applicants must provide high quality Forensic Evaluations according to best practice standards and produce a comprehensive written report using a standardized format within timelines determined by case requirements.

The majority of referrals to Qualified Applicants will be for Forensic Evaluations pursuant to a Court order or a Court-related need. DHS and the Court anticipates the need for approximately 2,000 Forensic Evaluations, inclusive of all three case types, each year. On occasion, Forensic Evaluations may be requested for individuals or families for additional considerations (e.g., aging, intellectual or developmental limitation or disability, serious mental illness or psychiatric disorder).

The County and the Court are seeking Qualified Applicants who recognize the unique challenges that an individual or family faces and who will engage families in the Forensic Evaluation process in a sensitive, culturally appropriate way. Qualified Applicants must have the ability to assess, evaluate and make treatment recommendations for people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Qualified Applicants must be collaborative partners with the County and the Court and provide services that best meet the needs children and families.

Family members referred for evaluation often face issues that call for expertise in a specialized subject area that includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of LGBTQ issues, domestic violence, sexual abuse and substance use. Qualified Applicants may have training or experience in one or more of these specialized subject areas.

Qualified Applicants must be available to testify in Court, as needed, as the Court's witness. The Court and/or another party may contact the Qualified Applicant in advance to prepare for testimony. In most cases, the Qualified Applicant may testify by telephone; however, the Qualified Applicant may also have to appear in Court. It is also possible that the Court may decide to admit the Qualified Applicant's report into evidence without the Qualified Applicant's testimony, provided that the report was delivered in a timely way to all appropriate persons and that no one objects.

### **Dependency Case Requirements**

For Dependency Cases, Qualified Applicants will provide Forensic Evaluations of children and families who are subject to the supervision of DHS for the purpose of placement planning, permanency planning and TPR. The evaluations can include clinical assessment, formal testing and/or clinical observation.

When a child or other party in a Dependency Case is in need of an evaluation, the Court may order a Forensic Evaluation to determine the best interests of the child. A Forensic Evaluation referral will be

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<sup>1</sup> This RFQ does not preclude a group practice approach whereby a licensed social worker or other appropriately qualified mental health professional is employed to assist with the evaluation, through provision of a psychosocial assessment, or compilation of background, developmental and/or collateral information to support the evaluation. However, all evaluations must be completed and conducted under the auspices of and with direct participation of the doctoral level psychologist or psychiatrist as required.

sent to the Qualified Applicant setting forth a specific referral question and/or issue. Typical referral questions may include, but not be limited to:

- What is the nature and quality of the bond between parent and child?
- Is the parent currently able to provide adequate care and safety for the child?
- What interventions, including formal treatment, supports and/or services, are indicated in order to assist the parent and/or child(ren) in addition to what is already in place (if anything)?
- What is the quality of the child's relationship with foster parent(s), what would be the effects of reuniting this child with the family of origin (family prior to removal), and how best could this be done? What is the likely impact of separating this child from his/her parent(s) and/or siblings?

If the Qualified Applicant determines it necessary to conduct an assessment of a family member or other person(s) not listed on the referral or Court order, the Qualified Applicant must obtain approval from the Court prior to conducting the additional assessment(s).

Forensic Evaluation Report Standards: Reports for Dependency Cases must be consistent with best practice evaluation standards as outlined in the Commonwealth's "Guidelines for Best Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service," published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare) Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS),<sup>2</sup> and in accordance with suggested samples or additional guidelines, including those from Community Care Behavioral Health Organization<sup>3</sup> and others.<sup>4</sup> A report must be completed and issued within 14 calendar days of the completed Forensic Evaluation appointment. Failure to do so may result in a financial penalty. The report should include the date(s) of the evaluations(s), the date that the report was completed and the specific source of all relevant information whether obtained directly or from collateral sources.

### **Delinquency Case Requirements**

The Court may order or a probation officer may request a Forensic Evaluation for a juvenile for the purpose of mental health treatment and/or placement planning or, in juvenile probation cases, competency determinations. Juveniles requiring a Forensic Evaluation for a Delinquency Case may be living at home, detained in Shuman Detention Center, placed in the Hartman Male Shelter in McKeesport, placed in foster or kinship care, or residing in another placement facility. All Forensic Evaluations must be scheduled within two business days following the receipt of the order or referral. The evaluation is to be conducted within 15 days when the youth is detained at Shuman or placed in the Hartman Shelter and within 20 days in all other cases.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/manual/s\\_001583.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/manual/s_001583.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Community Care Behavioral Health Organization Performance Standards – Best Practice Evaluations  
<http://www.ccbh.com/pdfs/Providers/performanceStandards/BestPracticeEvaluations.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia Mental Health Care Corporation, Behavioral Health Forensic Evaluation Center: Guidelines for Evaluations (Psychologist Evaluator):

<http://www.pmhcc.org/images/PDF/consultingopportunities/psychologistevaluationguidelinestier2.pdf>;

New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Guidelines for Expert Evaluations and Child Abuse/Neglect Proceedings (Mental Health)

[http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/contracting/MH%20forensic%20guidelines\\_members.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/contracting/MH%20forensic%20guidelines_members.pdf)

In conducting Forensic Evaluations for Delinquency Case referrals, the Qualified Applicant will be expected to submit a written report according to “Life Domain Format for Psychiatric/Psychological Evaluations: Initial and Continued Care” (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).<sup>5</sup> The report should pay particular attention to:

- Level of social and intellectual functioning
- Decision-making capabilities
- Social and family support in child’s life
- Degree of support needed for the child to function independently in the community
- History of psychotropic medication use
- Level of mental health care necessary

For Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) referrals, a psychiatric Forensic Evaluation is required. Qualified Applicants must follow “Guidelines for Best Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service,” published by OMHSAS.

Forensic Evaluation Report Standards: An interim report must be electronically submitted within 72 hours of the Forensic Evaluation to the Human Services Administration Organization (HSAO),<sup>6</sup> the Judge who ordered the Forensic Evaluation, the active probation officer, the Assistant District Attorney, and the Assistant Public Defender or Defense Counsel of Record. The Qualified Applicant is required to electronically submit the final full report within 14 calendar days following the evaluation.

### **Custody Case Requirements**

The scope of a Custody Case Forensic Evaluation may vary according to the needs of the particular case and the specific questions to be addressed. The Court may order a full-scale psychological evaluation, including standardized tests, assessments, recommendations and interviews of parents, caregivers, children and other household members. The Qualified Applicant should clarify the scope requested prior to beginning the Forensic Evaluation. The Qualified Applicant is expected to perform and complete the Forensic Evaluation in support of the best interests of the child.

In lieu of a full psychological evaluation, the Court may instead order an issue-specific evaluation, an individual-specific evaluation, an addendum to an original evaluation report, or an updated evaluation. The Court may order a specialized test or assessment in Custody Cases where concerns of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse exist.

Forensic Evaluation Report Standards: Full Forensic Evaluations and subsequent reports must be completed within 60 calendar days of the entry of the appointment order or within the timeframe specified by the Court. Other evaluations mentioned above may require an earlier completion date. Reports must be written according to APA Guidelines of Practice and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Model.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://pa.performcare.org/pdf/providers/education-training/life-domain-format-psych-evaluations.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> HSAO acts as service coordinator for adults and children with behavioral health needs and will already have had contact with the child or youth in need of Forensic Evaluation in Delinquency Cases.

<sup>7</sup> See APA Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings <http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/child-custody.aspx> and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Model Standard of Practice for Child Custody Evaluations <http://www.afccnet.org/portals/0/modelstdschildcustodyevalsept2006.pdf>

## 3.2 Eligibility and Expectations

In order to provide access to the highest quality of Forensic Evaluations, DHS and the Court are interested in procuring one or more Qualified Applicants who have the credentials necessary to provide creative solutions and strategies to best serve children and families. DHS and the Court acknowledge that not all Applicants believe themselves qualified to conduct Forensic Evaluations in all three of the areas noted above (dependency, delinquency and custody); and further, that Applicants may employ varying approaches to provide the services described in this RFQ. Applicants can apply to provide Forensic Evaluations in one, two or all three areas. Applications from Single Providers should expressly indicate the expertise of the practice as a whole, but may reflect the particular expertise held by one or more of the individuals in the practice. Each case area will be score separately. The Single Provider section will be scored separately from the case areas. Current providers are not pre-qualified and must submit a Proposal and be qualified in order to continue performing Forensic Evaluations.

Applicants should address their qualifications by responding to the specifically requested items or questions in the Response Form. Applicants should download and type their responses directly into the Response Form available on the Active Solicitations webpage at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).

### A. All Applicants (35 points)

To qualify, all Applicants must:

- Have a clear understanding of the role of a Forensic Evaluator (5 points)
- Be licensed and enrolled/credentialed in good standing with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Medical Assistance Program, maintain Act 33/34 clearances, and maintain appropriate levels of malpractice and liability insurance (a Single Provider's policies must cover all affiliated personnel) (5 points)
- Have existing valid contracts with Community Care Behavioral Health (CCBH) or be eligible to participate in the CCBH network by the time of the first referral (5 points)
- Be knowledgeable of and adhere to the relevant ethical standards, principals and codes of conduct for the professional discipline, (e.g., psychology, psychiatry, social work),<sup>8</sup> and be clear of any history of ethical violations or civil and/or criminal actions taken against the Applicant's license (5 points)
- Demonstrate cultural competence and the ability to assess, evaluate and make treatment recommendations for people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds and recognize the particular challenges and contributing difficulties that an individual or family may face as a result (5 points)
- Demonstrate any training and experience in a specialized subject area such as knowledge of LGBTQ issues, domestic violence, sexual abuse and substance use (5 points)
- Conduct evaluations in an office location that is accessible to public transportation or be willing to conduct evaluations in a designated safe, confidential and neutral site, if appropriate, and have flexibility to provide some night and/or weekend hours (5 points)

### B. Dependency Cases (30 points)

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<sup>8</sup> American Medical Association's Code of Ethics, <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics.page>; Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers, <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

Applicants applying to be qualified for Dependency Cases must:

- Have educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Dependency Cases (5 points)
- Demonstrate thorough understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Dependency Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and strong experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in connection with issues related to Dependency Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to the types of Court-directed questions and issues outlined in *Section 3.1* (5 points)
- Present an appropriate approach and process for Dependency Case Forensic Evaluations (5 points)
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Dependency Cases and have the ability to schedule appointments for Court-ordered evaluations within the time frames outlined in this RFQ or within the time frame required based upon the needs of the case (5 points)
- Demonstrate knowledge of and experience with the continuum of treatment options and community resources available to families (e.g., mental health and behavioral health services) (5 points)

#### **C. Delinquency Cases (20 points)**

Applicants applying to be qualified for Delinquency Cases must:

- Have educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Delinquency Cases (5 points)
- Demonstrate thorough understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Delinquency Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and strong experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in connection with issues related to Delinquency Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to the types of Court-directed questions and issues outlined in *Section 3.1* (5 points)
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Delinquency Cases and have the ability to schedule appointments for Court-ordered evaluations within the time frames outlined in this RFQ or within the time frame required based upon the needs of the case (5 points)

#### **D. Custody Cases (25 points)**

Applicants applying to be qualified for Custody Cases must:

- Have educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Custody Cases (5 points)
- Demonstrate thorough understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Custody Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and strong experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in

connection with issues related to Custody Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to the types of Court-directed questions and issues outlined in *Section 3.1* (5 points)

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Custody Cases and have the ability to schedule appointments for Court-ordered evaluations within the time frames outlined in this RFQ or within the time frame required based upon the need of the case (5 points)
- Have an accommodating policy that allows for a specified number of *pro bono* or sliding scale evaluations in custody matters where the parties are indigent (5 points)

#### **E. Single Provider (25 points)**

To qualify as a Single Provider, Applicants must:

- Employ highly qualified licensed clinicians who meet all of the qualifications listed above and have a strong oversight and supervision process (5 points)
- Possess a centralized intake process for all cases (5 points)
- Maintain monthly statistical data and reports concerning the evaluations ordered by the Court and other agencies, including, but not limited to:
  - Case name and appropriate docket/case identification number
  - Date of Court Order, if appropriate
  - Name of evaluator assigned to the case
  - Charge for evaluation
  - Scope of Evaluation
  - Date report due
  - Identification of cases where evaluation is terminated due to lack of cooperation and/or timely payment (in custody cases).
  - Date paid and source of payment (5 points)
- Offer a minimum of 16 evening (after 6 p.m.) and/or weekend hours per month for evaluations (5 points)
- Strong financial health, as evidenced by audits or other supporting financial documentation (5 points)

## **Section 4: The Evaluation Process**

### **4.1 Evaluation Model**

Applications will be evaluated by an evaluation committee convened by DHS and the Court. The evaluation committee will assign scores based on the Program description in *Section 3.1: Scope* and on the evaluation criteria in *Section 3.2: Eligibility and Expectations* using the scale listed in *Section 4.2 c*.

### **4.2 Evaluation Process**

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. An Evaluation Committee will be formed by the DHS and the Court and will consist of some or all of the following:
  - Content experts from within DHS, selected for their expertise and/or experience
  - DHS administration

- Representatives of the Court, foundations, educational institutions, community and civic organizations, businesses and/or non-profit agencies
- b. Each member of the Evaluation Committee will sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest agreement.
  - c. All Evaluation Committee members will individually review and score each Application. Each Evaluation Committee member will award points to each response on an Applicant's Response Form according to their expertise and best judgment of how the Application submitted by that Applicant meets the evaluation criteria in *Section 3.2* using the following scale:
    - 0 – Not addressed in Application
    - 1 – Poor
    - 2 – Below expectations
    - 3 – Meets expectations
    - 4 – Exceeds expectations
    - 5 – Outstanding
  - d. The Evaluation Committee members then will meet collectively to compile and discuss the individual scores and evaluations of each committee member.
  - e. The County shall have exclusive discretion to shortlist a reduced number of Applications for more extensive review using the same criteria outlined above. In this case, DHS and/or the Court may request that shortlisted Applicants make modifications to their Application or budget or make a formal oral presentation. The Evaluation Committee will review the modifications and/or oral presentation and rescore the shortlisted Applications using the original evaluation criteria.
  - f. At any time during the review process, DHS may contact an Applicant to discuss any areas of the Application needing clarification or further explanation.
  - g. The Evaluation Committee will submit its recommendation for which Applicants to qualify to the Director of DHS for his approval. The County is under no obligation to award or enter into an Agreement as a result of this RFQ. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Applications.
  - h. All Applicants will be notified of their status following the final determination of which Applicant(s) will be qualified.
  - i. Applicants not qualified who are interested in receiving feedback regarding their submission may request a phone call at [DHSProposals@allegheycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@allegheycounty.us).

### **4.3 Other Requirements**

For an Application to be eligible for evaluation, it must be:

- Received by the due date/time
- Properly formatted and include responses to all requested information
- Complete with all required forms and attachments

Applications which do not meet the above requirements will not be considered.

## **Section 5: What Happens after an Applicant is Qualified?**

### **5.1 County Obligation**



Qualification is not a guarantee of selection for specific assignments. A Qualified Applicant may or may not be selected for any assignments.

## **5.2 Selection Process**

Evaluations will be assigned to the most appropriate Qualified Applicant, based upon the following criteria:

- Expertise in the designated case area and specialized subject area
- Availability and ability to complete the assignment within the designated time frame
- Geographic location and hours of operation accommodating to the family's needs
- When applicable, DHS's previous experience with the Qualified Applicant in a similar situation

## **5.3 Contract Award**

Qualification through this RFQ does not necessarily mean that a Qualified Applicant will be awarded an Agreement with Allegheny County to complete a specific assignment.

After qualification by DHS, Qualified Applicants may be selected on an as-needed basis. If selected for a specific assignment, Qualified Applicants will be required to enter into an Agreement with Allegheny County, on behalf of DHS, under which services will be purchased and reimbursed on an hourly basis.

Qualification obtained through this RFQ will be effective for two years with the potential for renewal for up to five years at the discretion of the County.

# **Section 6: Contract Information**

In order to enter into an Agreement with the County, Applicants must be willing to comply with all contract requirements listed below and all standard terms and conditions contained in a County contract for provision of services to DHS and its offices. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County are provided in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations), available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).

## **6.1 Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) Requirements**

Allegheny County has MWDBE goals of 13% participation for Minority Business Enterprises and 2% participation for Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, and expects that Applicants will make a good faith effort in assisting the County in meeting these goals.

- a. All Proposals must include either of the following:
  - a. If your organization is able to meet the MWDBE contract goals, a completed MWDBE Participation Statement and MWDBE Contact Information form is required. You must also attach the MWDBE certifications of the firms you intend to use with the Participation Statement.
  - b. If your organization will request a waiver from participating in the MWDBE contract goals, a completed MWDBE Participation Statement, MWDBE Contact Information form and MWDBE Waiver Request are required.

- b. Proposers may be registered and certified with the Allegheny County Department of Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. If so, please indicate registration on the MWDBE Participation Statement. Registered Proposers are still required to submit the applicable MWDBE forms.
- c. MWDBE forms and resources can be found at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations):
  - a. MWDBE Forms
    - o [MWDBE Participation Statement](#)
    - o [MWDBE Waiver Request](#)
    - o [MWDBE Contact Information form](#)
  - b. MWDBE Resources
    - o [MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)
    - o [MWDBE Response Checklist](#)
    - o [Guide for completing the MWDBE Participation Statement](#)
    - o [Sample Diversity Policy](#)
- d. For more information about MWDBEs, including a list of MWDBEs that have been certified by Allegheny County and the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program, can be found at the [Allegheny County MWDBE website](#).

## **6.2 HIPAA Compliance**

DHS is a covered entity under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, a Qualified Applicant must comply with all HIPAA requirements.

## **6.3 Cyber Security**

- a. Qualified Applicants must meet the minimum computer specifications which begin on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- b. All electronic devices must have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of an information breach.
- c. Qualified Applicants must also have policies in place to ensure that electronic devices are physically secure when not in use (e.g., locked in a vehicle trunk, password protected).

## **6.4 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Requirements**

By submitting an Application, an Applicant agrees to not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, client or any other person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, age (40 or over), or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.