

**Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services  
Request for Proposals Q&A**

Evaluation of a Predictive Risk Modeling Tool for Improving the Decisions of Child Welfare Workers

**December 23, 2015**

**23.) Currently, what is the screen-in rate for [General Protective Services] calls?**

In 2015 to date, approximately 54% of GPS calls were screened out. The remainder were either accepted for service or screened in for further investigation.

**December 18, 2015**

**22.) We would like to request permission to submit the application on or before the due date January 4, 2016 without the M/W/DBE Participation Waiver Request form. If approved we would submit the M/W/DBE Participation Waiver Request via email after the deadline. The reason for the request to submit the M/W/DBE Participation Waiver Request form after the deadline is that our administrative offices will be shut down for winter closure starting December 19 and reopen January 4, 8am Pacific standard time (11am Eastern).**

We recognize that the active solicitation period coincides with the holiday season and the closure of many universities and businesses. As such, if you are having difficulty obtaining the required attachments by January 4, please let us know, and we will accommodate your request for an extension on certain attachments, including the MWDBE form. We expect the narrative and budget template by 3 PM January 4.

**December 17, 2015**

**21.) Does our company's organizational experience count toward the 10-page limit for the Narrative section of the proposal?**

Yes, the Organizational Experience section is part of the required Narrative section and counts toward the ten page limit. Please note, if you are applying to conduct both the impact evaluation and the process evaluation, you should include two separate Narratives of up to 10 pages each, each including an Organizational Experience section. (If you are submitting two Narratives, the Organizational Experience sections may be identical, or may be edited to strengthen the respective Narratives.)

**20.) The RFP requests a financial audit for the organization, and I would be applying as a university professor: so, would the financial audit that is requested be for the university as a whole, for my respective department, or something else?**

The goal of this request is to allow the proposer to demonstrate their financial sustainability. Please provide whatever documentation would best support that, in your estimation. For more information about County audit requirements, please reference the [Provider Audit Guidelines](#) section of "Common

to ALL contractors” webpage: <http://alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Current-Providers.aspx>

**19.) Is there a clear start and end date for the project work?**

No. Please see Question 7 below. Please include an estimated timeline for completion of the evaluation in your Proposal.

**18.) Is the tool only used by the workers who receive the referrals, or is the tool used on an ongoing basis by caseworkers who are assigned to and working with the family?**

Please see Questions 10-12 under the Webinar Questions, below.

**17.) Are there specific workers assigned to intake, who only take referrals, or is there a rotation of caseworkers taking the referrals?**

Please see Question 10 under the Webinar Questions, below.

**16.) What is the policy from Allegheny County regarding indirect cost rates on budgets for the RFP proposal submissions? The background to this question is that when universities such as ours submit proposal to many federal agencies they typically use the Facilities and Administration rate and the fringe benefit rates that they have negotiated with the U.S. Office of Naval Research.**

Allegheny County will consider approved, federally negotiated indirect rates. However, if the institution has a local rate, this would be preferred.

**15.) How many call responders currently work for Allegheny County?**

Please see Question 10 under the Webinar Questions, below.

<b>Questions Asked During Webinar on December 11, 2015</b>
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**14.) Can we get a copy of the slides?**

Yes. A copy of the slides, an updated version of the Q&A and a recording of the webinar will be posted to our Active Solicitation webpage within 5 business days.

**13.) Are you currently using the system described in the RFP? Or is the responsibility of the Successful Proposer to design this system?**

We are not currently using the system described in the RFP. Our intention is start working with an evaluator at this stage, so that they can provide some feedback on the design before release.

The PRM tool will not replace any actuarial or other validated risk assessment tool. Call screeners can access Clientview, a DHS application that allows viewers to review integrated client data stored in the DHS data warehouse but this is just descriptive data about client service experiences and does not resemble a risk assessment tool.

**12.) Will the evaluator be involved in the roll-out of the tool, or will the evaluator help figure out the most useful user end output and how satisfied people are? Overall, is the evaluator involved in creation or evaluation?**

The primary role of the evaluator is to evaluate the tool, but we do plan to have the evaluation team in place to help finalize the design. The evaluator won't have the burden of doing the design work, but will have the opportunity to work with the county and research team on final design and to ensure that final design lends itself to evaluation.

**11.) After the call screeners screen individuals, what is the level of quality of follow-up?**

DHS receives approximately 55 calls a day. For the impact evaluation, evaluators will have access to the full (de-identified) child welfare case management data including (but not limited to) accept for service decisions, placements, reunifications, and critical incidents. The evaluators will also have access to rich case note, social history and contact note data which could be analyzed.

**10.) How many call screeners are there for the 55 calls per day?**

There are eleven designated call screeners that work on a shift schedule. Approximately seven individuals in management/supervisory positions take occasional referrals as well.

To clarify, Allegheny County only screens a subset of calls, essentially the ones where neglect is alleged. Allegations of abuse are screened through a state hotline in Harrisburg. Although there is not discretion as to whether these reports are screened in / screened out, there is still the opportunity for these calls to be risk scored and tracked over time.

**9.) So, is this tool only for the neglect cases?**

PA law is unique. Child maltreatment is broken into two categories: Child Protective Services (this category includes physical and sexual abuse and very serious neglect) and General Protective Services (includes, e.g., chronic neglect, truancy, behavioral health concerns with the parent). If a caller is alleging serious physical abuse, falling under Child Protective Services, the call goes to a state hotline, not to Allegheny County. The remaining cases, which fall under General Protective Services, come to Allegheny County.

The initial roll-out of the tool will focus only on Allegheny County's screening decisions (GPS cases). Part of the evaluation team's task will be to assess how effectively the tool improves the screening decisions made by Allegheny County intake workers.

**8.) Will a risk score only be assigned to a subset of cases?**

Eventually, we plan to use the tool to assign a risk score for all cases, regardless of where the screening decision was made, to improve decision making at other points in the child welfare case. But initially the tool will be applied to the screening decision for the subset of calls (GPS) that are screened by Allegheny County.

**7.) Will you post a copy of the timeline along with the slides?**

<b>Models developed on historic data:</b>	Underway, finalizing by January 2016
<b>Models tested on live data:</b>	Beginning January 2016
<b>Design of visualizations for call screeners:</b>	End of January 2016
<b>Visualizations built:</b>	End of February 2016
<b>Training:</b>	March
<b>Rollout date:</b>	End of March

Evaluation process:	Beginning in March
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**6.) Ultimately what do you see as the benefit of the evaluation for the County?**

We want to know how these tools work in the field, how they change or don't change worker behavior, and if we are making better decisions for the safety and welfare of children using these tools.

We're interested in impacts on minority populations as well. We are exploring racial disproportionality in our system. The first step on a path of disparate treatment of people of color is whether the call is screened in to begin with, so we are interested in any kind of bias that exists in our decision making at the screening level. Not the sole purpose of this evaluation, but we are hoping for some insights about the objectivity of our screening process.

There is also recognition that county has invested in the tremendous resource of the data warehouse, and we are interested in ways to help screeners and others be more intentional about using the data warehouse as a resource.

**5.) Funding level is \$200,000 and people are able to apply for the impact evaluation or process evaluation. Does that mean that there will \$200,000 for each evaluation?**

The total budget for evaluation is \$200,000.

**4.) If you are applying for both, process and impact, is the narrative still limited to 10 pages?**

Please see Question 21.

**3.) On Page 7 of the RFP, you refer to self-selected collaborators. Can you explain what that means?**

What we're trying to emphasize is that we want you to work with the overall research team and the DHS team, as well as whomever you have selected as collaborators as part of your proposed team.

**2.) Going to post the answers from this webinar within five business days, and the RFP says the final answers will be posted on December 31. Are these the only two dates that answers will be posted?**

No, we will post answers to questions as they come in. The deadline to submit questions is December 23, and we will have final answers to questions that come in by then posted no later than December 31.

<b>December 8, 2015</b>
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**1.) The company for which I work will be bidding on an Allegheny County DHS RFP, but the "Cover Page" that is linked on the Allegheny County website ("Solicitations" page, "Required Documents" section) is corrupted and cannot be opened. Can you please let me know where we can obtain a soft copy of this PDF?**

This problem has been corrected. You can now correctly download the Cover Page from our website.