



Allegany County Department of Human Services

# RFP Response Form

## RFP for Homeless Prevention Services for Child Welfare-Active Families

### PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Familylinks

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Marianne DiMatteo, Chief Operations Officer & Rebecca S. Haberstroh, Director of Youth and Family Services

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Website: www.familylinks.org

Legal Status:  For-Profit Corp.  Nonprofit Corp.  Sole Proprietor  Partnership

Date Incorporated: 2001

Partners and/or Subcontractors included in this Proposal: NA

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* Recipient of the DHS proposals by email.

### REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Frederick Massey, Jr.	412-942-0411	fmassey@familylinks.org
Contract Processing Contact	Marianne DiMatteo	412-942-0514	mdimatteo@familylinks.org
Chief Information Officer	Frederick Massey, Jr.	412-942-0411	fmassey@familylinks.org
Chief Financial Officer	Frederick Massey, Jr.	412-942-0411	fmassey@familylinks.org
MPER Contact*	Marlo Svidron	412-942-0421	msvidron@familylinks.org

\* [MPER](#) is DHS's provider and contract management system. Please list an administrative contract to update and manage this system for your agency.

### BOARD INFORMATION

Provide a list of your board members as an attachment or in the space below.

See attachment - Familylinks Board of Directors FY 2019/20

## **RFP for Homeless Prevention Services for Child Welfare-Active Families**

Board Chairperson Name & Title: Tony Matteo, Board Chairperson

Board Chairperson Address: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Telephone: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Email: [REDACTED]

### **REFERENCES**

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.

*Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.*

Robert Utter, Familylinks ARIA Program Landlord, [REDACTED]

Kelli Priddy, Familylinks Volunteer 20+ years, [REDACTED]

Beth Kreinin, Independent Contractor, [REDACTED]

### **PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

Date Submitted 7/8/2019

Amount Requested: \$997,650/year

### **CERTIFICATION**

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

I have read the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts and the requirements for DHS Cyber Security, EEOC/Non-Discrimination and HIPAA.

By submitting this proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate, and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Please submit the following attachments with your Response Form. These can be found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations>.

- MWDBE documents
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- 3 years of audited financial reports
- W-9
- Budget attachment, as desired

## **RFP for Homeless Prevention Services for Child Welfare-Active Families**

### **REQUIREMENTS**

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is 110 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 15 pages.

#### **Organizational Experience (25 points possible)**

1. Describe your organizational experience providing housing-related services to quickly stabilize families.

Familylinks has served Southwestern Pennsylvania for more than 50 years, bringing vital, family-centered support services to the most vulnerable populations in our community. During fiscal year 2018, Familylinks directly served nearly 11,000 individuals through our three primary service areas: Behavioral Health Services, Education and Community Services, and Youth and Family Services. In addition, Familylinks reached approximately 10,000 residents of Allegheny County through school/community education programs.

Familylinks has provided housing and supportive services in Allegheny County for more than 30 years. Several of our staff members, including Program Managers, have over 20 years of experience with Familylinks, providing these services to the target population identified in this Request for Proposal (RFP). The housing programs Familylinks provide include ARIA, Community Housing Program, Transitional Living Program (TLP), Downtown Outreach Center & Shelter (DOCS), Adolescent Semi-Independent Living, Family Treatment Center, and Poverty Prevention & Alleviation. All of these have a full range of supportive services available through Familylinks or our partner agencies.

Familylinks has a housing first model for their housing programs. Familylinks believes that housing is a human right, meaning that individuals deserve to have their basic needs met. It allows for immediate access to housing, then wrapping services around them. There are no housing readiness conditions. They are not required to be clean, be attending treatment or participate in other goals to receive housing. The client drives their housing plan and any goals they wish to work on.

Since 1972, Familylinks has been providing an array of support services to at-risk and homeless youth, including federally funded programs. Through DOCS (established 1984) and TLP (established 2008), Familylinks served approximately 5,000 at-risk, homeless, and street youth. Additionally, Familylinks has served as the region's representative for the National Safe Place Network for more than 30 years. Safe Place is a community program where local businesses and entities can partner with Familylinks to create a network of identifiable locations where youth in crisis can get immediate help.

Familylinks also successfully operates a Permanent Supportive Housing Program, our Community Housing Program (CHP), with 12 households designated for some of Allegheny County's most vulnerable. This population encompasses chronically homeless individuals and families with a disability.

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In 2017, Familylinks also acquired the ARIA program, a contract with the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF). This program provides Rental Assistance to participants whose homelessness is a barrier to drug and alcohol treatment, and who have a goal with OCYF of reunification or preservation. This program operates on housing first, a rapid-rehousing platform focusing on meeting the basic needs of participants immediately (shelter and food), then wrapping services around. Both programs have proven to be extremely successful. Last year, we ranked within the top 10 programs and had a very positive monitoring/audit.

The ARIA program is the first housing program of its kind launched by OCYF. The program piloted a Housing Team design, made up of a OCYF Contract Monitor, OCYF Designated Point Person (in this case, the Mon Valley Resource Coordinator), OCYF Drug and Alcohol Specialist, OCYF Familylinks Director, Housing Program Manager, and Housing Coordinators. It allowed for the team to tackle any unforeseen circumstances, like contract monitoring clarification or client concerns, on bi-weekly conference calls. Together they were able to work through a collaborative strategy on how to move forward. They are currently in the process of designing a comprehensive report to measure and monitor the program budget, as well as outcomes. This collaborative model has been adopted by OCYF to use for all new programming, due to proven success in the ARIA program.

Prior to joining the Familylinks team, the CHP/ARIA Program Manager supervised a variety of programs that ranged from prevention to long term housing stability for chronically homeless individuals. These programs included: a Homeless Prevention program funded through the United Way, Emergency Shelter, four Transitional Housing programs that focused on homeless individuals who had a mental health diagnosis and/or a drug and alcohol diagnosis, Chronically Mentally Ill (CMI) Permanent Housing funded through the Office of Behavioral Health, and facility based Chronically Homeless Permanent Supportive Housing Program. The current Program Manager will be available to offer support and assistance to the new program under the Familylinks' housing team umbrella.

Furthermore, Familylinks has an excellent reputation in the region. Familylinks is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), an internationally recognized accreditation body. This accreditation represents a validation that Familylinks' services meet the highest standards in the social service and behavioral healthcare industry.

Another strength of Familylinks is our ability to coordinate services with other agencies. The Housing Specialist is the key to linking participants with individualized services they may need.

In addition, Familylinks staff participates in Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provider meetings, Continuum of Care Analysis and Planning Committee meetings, Housing Assistance Program, and Continue of Care bi-monthly meetings. Familylinks is also a member of the Housing Alliance and our staff serve as board members for agencies such as the Homeless Children's Education Fund, the Allegheny County Homeless Outreach Coordination Committee, and the Homeless Advisory Board.

Finally, Familylinks receives routine monitoring, and is in compliance with the following agencies regarding the federal, state and county programs we manage: HUD, HAP, HHS,

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Allegheny County Department of Health, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Pennsylvania Department of Health, McKinney-Vento, Hunger Trust and others. Familylinks holds a Certificate of Compliance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Welfare, in accordance with the Public Welfare Code of 1967, P.L. 31 (as amended).

### **2. Describe your organizational experience providing a mobile or in-home service.**

The ARIA Rental Assistance Program is a contracted program with Familylinks and OCYF that launched in 2017. The program was designed to replicate in-home services, while also adding the housing and monetary assistance elements, to best support OCYF families who are unstably housed, homeless, or on the brink of homelessness. When a referral is made to the program, often the family has been working with an in-home service. Upon acceptance into the ARIA program, the in-home program is required to close due to a service duplication, with the exception of cases where in-home services are present for the child. The ARIA team works with the OCYF Case Workers and the current in-home service to ensure a smooth transition into the program and to continue working on the goals identified for each family. The ARIA Housing Coordinator is able to provide all of the services that traditional in-home programs are contracted for, with the addition of financial assistance for security deposits, rent, and utilities. The in-home replicated services include: individual/family service plans, advocacy, housing services, access to homeless preference voucher applications, referrals for specialized services (including mental health treatment, drug and alcohol treatment, general public assistance, budgeting, job training, career services, education programs, parenting classes, basic- need assistance, community integration services, etc.), support groups, recovery groups, community resources and neighborhood resource navigation.

As an example, the ARIA program accepted a referral to the program in February of 2018. The family consisted of a single mother and three children. The mother's goal was reunification contingent upon her completing drug and alcohol treatment and maintaining housing. At the intake appointment, the mother appeared very hesitant. She had recently been released from a correctional facility and believed that she would never find anyone who was willing to rent to her. The Housing Coordinator began working with her to build rapport and gain her trust. The woman signed her lease at the end of March 2018. When she signed, she stated that it gave her the confidence and faith that she needed to turn her life around and regain custody of her children. With the help of the ARIA program, she successfully completed outpatient drug and alcohol treatment. She regularly attends mental health treatment and was connected to community resources such as non-cash benefits, parenting classes, employment assistance, furniture resources, and the Section 8 preference program. Currently, the woman has her children back in her custody and they are thriving. She was denied her voucher; however, with the help of the program and the Program Manager's advocacy, the decision has been overturned and the unit passed the Section 8 inspection. She has completed all requirements of her parole and will complete parole as soon as her fines have been mitigated. The woman has been clean for over a year and is seeking full-time employment. She is successfully set to graduate ARIA as soon as Section 8 begins taking over the subsidized housing payments.

### **3. Describe your organizational experience with the child welfare system.**

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Familylinks has an extensive, successful history of working with and providing services to individuals in the child welfare system. This includes some to the following specialized programs, in addition to the ARIA program already highlighted:

The RESPOND Program is a collaboration with UPMC-WPIC through a Familylinks contract with Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health to provide comprehensive mental health residential services to youth ages 4 to 21, who are dual-diagnosed with intellectual disability and mental illness, and who utilize three or more service systems.

The Pathways Program provides comprehensive residential services to youth ages 4-21, referred by DHS, diagnosed with mental illness and utilizing multiple service systems, including OCYF. Program focus is on addressing the youth's behavioral health and life skill development issues with the goals of well-being, safety and permanency. Coordinated care is provided to include internal psychiatric, mental health and substance use disorder counseling; case management; and appropriate residential setting, education/vocational linkages and coordination with legal system providers and DHS.

The Plum Step-Down Program provides comprehensive residential services to males ages 4-21, referred by OCYF or OBH through DHS Integration Services, diagnosed with a mental illness, and who are in need of a step down enhanced group home. Additionally, Familylinks has a similar program for females, between the ages of 10 to 21, referred by OCYF.

The Adolescent Semi-Independent Living Program (ASIL) offers apartment-style living for youth ages 16-21 who are involved in the foster care system. The focus is on educational, vocational, and life skills development for effective independent living and transition to adulthood.

Since 1986, Familylinks has provided 24/7 comprehensive emergency shelter services for at-risk youth between 13 to 21 years of age, and their families, for OCYF. Our focus is on safety, comprehensive assessment, education, service planning, and family reunification in a community based setting. We provide direct service interventions and/or link youth and family with appropriate Familylinks or community services in accordance with OCYF and the court system.

4. Describe your organizational ability to distribute financial assistance within 24 hours for arrearages, down payments, limited rental assistance and/or hard goods in accordance with guidelines set with DHS.

Familylinks is proposing in its staffing structure a Disbursement Coordinator position. Upon admission to the program, families will provide income verification. The Housing Specialist will act as the liaison between the landlord and the family to determine if the family will be able to maintain their current housing. If arrearages can be mitigated, the Housing Specialist will work with the family to pay back due rent. The participants will be asked to provide documentation of income, assets, and arrearages. In these situations, the Housing Coordinator will work with the current landlord to complete a unit inspection to ensure the unit is safe and habitable, obtain a W-9, and secure a consent of understanding that the landlord is willing to accept a one-time payment from a third party. Once these documents are obtained, the Housing Coordinator will

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submit a grant expense voucher to the Disbursement Coordinator. A check can then be processed and distributed within 24 hours of the request. The Housing Coordinator can work with the landlord to decide if the landlord needs the check to be delivered by hand or mailed.

In cases of utility arrears, the participant will be asked to provide documentation of income, assets, and arrearages to the appropriate utility company. Once the documentation is secured, the Housing Specialist can submit a request for approval. In most cases, a payment can be made same-day directly onto the account of the client via on-line payment with a credit card or payment by phone. In cases where a large amount is owed to a utility company, Familylinks has a history of paying a portion of what is owed to ensure the utility can be turned on and would look to replicate that practice in this program. Referrals would then be made to other agencies, such as the Urban League, CAP Program, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for ongoing financial support.

In situations where a household is in need of a new unit, the Housing Specialist will act as the liaison between the participant and the new landlord/property manager. Upon the first meeting (the eligibility screening), the Housing Specialist will work with the participant to obtain all current documentation (identification, social security cards, birth certificates). The participants will be asked to provide documentation of income and assets. Additionally, the Housing Specialist and participant will discuss any housing barriers, such as criminal background and charges, credit information, and eviction history. The Housing Specialist will work with the participants to identify a unit in which the household would like to live and is able to afford. The Housing Coordinator will work with the potential landlord to complete a unit inspection to ensure the unit is safe and habitable, correct any safety concerns to the unit where needed, obtain a W-9, and secure a consent of understanding that the landlord is willing to accept a one-time payment from a third party. Once these documents are obtained, the Housing Coordinator will submit a grant expense voucher to the Disbursement Coordinator. A check can then be processed and distributed within 24 hours of the request. A lease signing appointment will be scheduled with the participant, landlord, and Housing Specialist, and a check can be delivered upon the appointment.

### **Staffing (25 points possible)**

5. Describe your proposed staffing structure, specifying the number of Housing Specialists, supervisors and/or other staff required and how they will fit within your current organizational structure.

As a component of the Housing Department, the Homeless Prevention Program staffing will include three (3) full-time Housing Specialists, who will be hired to assist participants in making linkages designed to quickly resolve their housing crisis. In addition to Housing Specialists, the program will also be hiring a Legal Advocate to assist with any housing concerns regarding tenant and landlord law. Finally, a Disbursement Coordinator will complete the staffing complement with primary duties as highlighted above.

The program will have access to a Trainer who will provide and assist with in-house trainings for staff and program participants. These trainings would include topics such as: Motivational

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Interviewing, Child Welfare Law, Housing Law Basics, Critical Time Intervention, How to Navigate through the Housing System, How to be A Good Tenant, etc.

The program will be primarily managed by a Program Manager, with support from Familylinks' existing Housing Program Manager, a Senior Program Manager, and the Director of Youth and Family Services. Requirements for the Program Manager position in this specific program will include knowledge in the following areas: housing; homelessness; tenant rights; public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher System; critical time intervention; motivational interviewing; child, adolescent, and family development; community resources; and other supportive services.

The positions for this program will include:

- 1 Director - .10 FTE - Master's Degree
- 1 Senior Program Manager - .10 FTE - Master's Degree
- 1 Program Manager - 1.0 FTE - Bachelor's Degree
- 3 Housing Specialists - 3.0 FTE - Bachelor's Degree
- 1 Legal Advocate - 1.0 FTE - Bachelor's Degree
- 1 Client Education/Trainer - .25 FTE - Bachelor's Degree
- 1 Disbursement Coordinator - .5 FTE - Bachelor's Degree
- 1 Administrative Assistant- 1.0 FTE

In addition to the direct services and supports provided by the Housing Specialists, Familylinks can provide a significant number of support services for participants. Familylinks has an established infrastructure of integrated Behavioral Health and Community and Family Services in Allegheny County. We can access the following Familylinks staff positions/services, as needed, for the program participants, allowing the Case Manager to fast-track essential services: Medical Director, Supports Coordinator, Certified Addiction Counselors, Masters Level Clinician, Nurse Practitioner, Certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Options Care Manager, Masters Level Mobile Clinician, Masters and Bachelors Level Family-Based Clinicians, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, and Licensed Professional Counselors.

Housing Specialists' essential duties and responsibilities will include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Accept referrals, review applications, and interview potential participants for program eligibility and admission.
- Secure eligibility documentation requirements from participants.
- Complete a housing triage, upon the eligibility assessment meeting, to identify natural supports and other options in attempts to divert the household from homelessness, without the assistance of the program. If diversion is not a viable option, and the participants meet the eligibility requirements, a Housing Stabilization Plan will be created.
- Act as a mediator between current landlords/property managers, the participant, and future landlords/property managers.
- Create a budget and educate participants about budgeting throughout their interaction with the program.
- Provide workshops/trainings to participants in the program.



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- Assist participants with navigating the housing system, including the private market, public housing, and the Housing Choice Voucher system.
- Participate in appeals for the Housing Voucher denial process, when appropriate.
- Identify gaps in identification and other necessary documentation for housing, vouchers and other rental arrangements. Assist participants in obtaining these documents, where appropriate.
- Maintain and contribute new potential landlords to an internal landlord database.
- Inspect identified potential or current apartments to meet county requirements, prior to admission, and during involvement in the housing program.
- Transport participants to view housing options and meet with landlords, when necessary.
- Work in partnership with OCYF Case Workers and Supervisors. Participate in each household's teaming and conferencing.
- Testify in court for each household, where necessary.
- Assist with landlord networking, marketing, and education
- Submit client rental vouchers/utility bills for reimbursement within 24 hours.
- Make participant referrals for job training, education, supportive services, community resources and housing options.
- Maintain case records/files on each participant admitted to the program.
- Complete participant service plan and progress notes.
- Maintain contact with participants and document accordingly.
- Co-facilitate the Prepared Renters Workshop (PREP), when needed.
- Participate in county audits.
- Complete required monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to the county funders.
- Participate in all staff development, training and meetings, as required.
- Enter monthly data requirements in KIDS, Client View, HMIS (if appropriate), and Allegheny Link.
- Enter and track all outcome information.
- Coordinate all functions of the rental properties, including but not limited to, renting of the properties, collecting of rents, and evictions.
- Work closely with property tenants to resolve issues, assist with referrals for informal Familylinks services, and work with the housing entities such as HUD, Local Housing Authorities, Housing Alliances, and Coalitions.
- Respond to emergency calls for repair work, including off hours.
- Inspect, identify, and report maintenance issues needing addressed to Supervisor.

### 6. Describe your plan to recruit, supervise and retain qualified staff.

As part of Familylinks' Strategic Plan, agency leadership has a commitment to hire caring professionals and to consider the results of a Predictive Index when making hiring decisions. Each individual's characteristics are carefully considered with respect to how suited they may be for a particular position, and it is far less likely that the 'wrong' person ends up with a given job duty.

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Our efforts are to attract qualified staff who mirror the cultural and racial diversity of the populations being served. At all times, Familylinks seeks to fill staff positions with candidates who are trained/experienced and fluent in family systems, child-adolescent, and addictions work, if employed in programs designed for those populations. Potential employment candidates will be required to have a Bachelor's degree, experience in housing, and demonstrate the ability to work with families involved in the Child Welfare system.

Filling staff vacancies is always top priority for both Human Resources and program management staff, and includes ongoing two-way communication between program staff, Human Resources, and Division Directors. Vacancies are covered by both the individual Program Manager, as necessary, as well as other programs' staff in individualized, creative, and time-limited backup coverage.

It is Familylinks' policy to provide all applicants equal opportunity and consideration for employment. Vacancies will be filled within Familylinks whenever practical, so interested and qualified individuals currently employed may have opportunities for advancement. However, Familylinks does reserve the right to recruit individuals not presently employed by Familylinks. Positions will be posted on the Familylinks internal website for a minimum of five (5) calendar days. The external recruitment for job vacancies will be made with consideration of the time frames for filling the positions, the associated costs and other related factors. Recruitment resources may include, but are not limited to, various print mediums (e.g., The New Pittsburgh Courier) professional organizations, personal networks, public employment and training centers, rewarded employee referrals, colleges and universities, various internet employment sites (e.g., Indeed), social media and any other recruitment means necessary.

Supervision is an integral part of employment at Familylinks at every level. Housing Specialists, the Legal Advocate, the Client Educator/Trainer, Disbursement Coordinator and Administrative Assistant will directly report to the Program Manager. Formalized individual supervision will occur weekly and team meetings will occur bi-weekly. Supervisions will be documented with SMART goals, client update, and concerns. The Program Manager reports to and has formalized individual supervision with the Senior Program Manager bi-weekly. The Senior Program manager reports to and has formalized individual supervision with the Youth and Family Services Director bi-weekly. The program is reviewed for progress, successes, and concerns. All levels provide technical assistance and support. The Youth and Family Services Director reports to and has bi-weekly supervision with the Chief Operating Officer, who in turn reports to the President and Chief Executive Officer. Familylinks endorses a policy of positive discipline that helps employees understand what is expected of them, how to effectively problem solve and to achieve the desired level of performance. All staff have a performance evaluation at (6) months of employment and annually thereafter.

As this is a new program, the Program Manager will also be assigned a Manager Mentor, well-versed in housing needs and challenges for guidance and support. The Manager Mentor has worked closely with OCYF active families. In addition, the Program staff will work in partnership with the assigned OCYF Contract Monitor and Resource Coordinator(s) for technical assistance and support. Goals and Outcomes are reported to the Performance and Quality

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Director and reviewed quarterly for progress and concerns. All data is reported to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis.

In addition to programmatic staff supervision and oversight, fiscal accountability controls will be instituted to ensure that funds are used and accounted for appropriately. Staff will submit original receipts to the Fiscal Accounts Payable Department for billing purposes for OCYF and will enter required data in OCYF KIDS. Program Leadership and the Finance Department will meet monthly to review revenue and expense reports for tracking expenditures and any discrepancies. Familylinks Contract Manager is the lead person to work directly with OCYF fiscal department and OCYF KIDS Liaison to resolve billing issues.

Familylinks' Human Resource department works to support employees and promote retention by offering a wide variety of programming for staff, such as wellness committee activities, financial management seminars on budget and first time home ownership, aspiring leadership training for first time managers, along with retirement seminars and a number of generous employee discount programs.

Additionally, staff retention is bolstered by a variety of internal efforts, including regular *ABCD (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty)* recognition and awards; participation in a three-day training in trauma-informed organizational philosophy called *Risking Connection*, including a component designed to inculcate increased sensitivity to staff 'vicarious trauma'; a licensure program to aid staff seeking individual licensure; regular opportunities for 'Brown Bag lunches' between randomly chosen staff and the agency CEO; annual Town Hall and Staff Appreciation luncheons for all staff; weekly individual supervision; and staff meetings. The Human Resource Department also conducts stay and exit interviews with staff.

Additionally, Familylinks offers regular and ongoing training to staff members through the organization's Training Institute -in addition to county and state-required trainings, including: Child Protective Services Laws, Mandated Reporting, Motivational Enhancement Therapy, LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training, Confidentiality, Safe Crisis Management, Parenting, Medications (including Naloxone/Narcan training), Dual Diagnosis, PCPC, Ethical practices, Infectious Diseases/HIV, HIPAA, CPR/First Aid, , and Fire Safety.

7. Describe your plan to ensure staff are knowledgeable about issues related to human services, homelessness and affordable housing.

Familylinks offers extensive training to all employees upon intake and encourages/requires additional ongoing training and conferences. Upon hire, staff will be trained and certified in core components of human services. New staff will also be partnered and participate in supervisions with managers and current veteran staff to ensure knowledge of the organizational structure, and funding and stakeholder structure. Familylinks is an active member with the Housing Alliance, which enables staff to attend collaborative meetings regarding Allegheny County's housing market. This includes landlord outreach events where programs, advocates and landlords are able to discuss resources, concerns and work collaboratively on filing vacant units.

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Housing staff will be given the opportunity to attend the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference on a yearly basis. This opportunity enables staff to stay abreast of national housing trends, new strategies on tackling homelessness, opportunities for growing a programs performance, networking opportunities, as well as general education.

Housing staff will be required to complete the Self-Determination Projects Prepared Renters Program, which will enable them to provide education to the program participants.

Over the last 20 years, Familylinks has actively worked through a strong established relationship with the Homeless Bureau in Allegheny County. Familylinks staff holds a seat on the Homeless Advisory Board, participates in various homeless committees, and staff routinely volunteer for homeless initiatives. Familylinks participates in and has hosted Rapid Re-Housing Community of Practice Meetings. The new Housing Navigation Unit at DHS is currently staffed by a former ARIA Housing Coordinator, and Familylinks maintains a positive relationship with this unit. The Familylinks training department collaborates with the Community Resource Specialist at DHS to host housing and community resource trainings in the Familylinks training facility.

This wealth of experience and the strong collaboration between the Homeless Bureau and Familylinks allows new staff to take full advantage of trainings and enables all staff to develop a network of support within Familylinks and the outside community.

8. Describe your plan to ensure staff are proficient in skills such as Motivational Interviewing, trauma-informed care and cultural competence.

Using the Positive Youth Development and trauma-informed care frameworks, Familylinks will employ the evidence-based practice of Motivational Interviewing, including the trans-theoretical model for change. Familylinks will utilize these models to establish and build relationships with homeless youth, help youth reframe their past traumatic experiences, encourage youth to recognize the need for change, and develop healthier coping mechanisms. The treatment model will include strategies designed to address the developmental impact of negative experiences, related strengths, and deficits. These strategies will provide an environment for each transition age youth leading to a positive and healthy life trajectory.

Familylinks will train all housing staff in the evidence-based practice of Motivational Interviewing and the Theory of Change. The Program Manager will attend a minimum of two participant meetings a month with the Housing Specialists to observe their engagement and interactions. All Familylinks staff are trained in “Risking Connections” (trauma informed care) and will approach participants to build relationships, help reframe their past traumatic experiences, and encourage participants to recognize the need for change and develop healthier coping mechanisms. All staff are required to attend Cultural Competency training.

Familylinks operates an internal training institute dedicated to the provision of all required and evidence based trainings to ensure staff across our system receive training to ensure all populations we work with are served. The training curriculum offered through Familylinks includes, but may not be limited to: Motivational Interviewing, CPR/ First Aid, Risking Connections, Trauma Informed Care, Addiction and Recovery, HIPPA, LGBTQIA 101,

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Professional Boundaries and Ethics, Community Safety, Leadership and Emotional Intelligence, among others. When available, staff also participate in trainings offered by the Department of Human Services.

In 2018, the ARIA Program Manager and Housing Coordinator attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference. Additionally, the ARIA Program Manager has completed the PREP (Prepared Renters Education Program) offered through the Pennsylvania Self-Determination Housing Project. Finally, the ARIA Program Manager has been enrolling in the DHS Housing Navigators training series, as they are announced.

Lastly, Familylinks training department has begun collaboration with Peter Harvey, the Community Resource Specialist at DHS. Through this partnership, Familylinks hosted a Tenant Rights and Responsibilities training featuring Dan Vitek, Esq. on June 27, 2019. Familylinks also partnered with DHS to fund the Critical Time Intervention Series focusing on evidence based practices for homelessness. The ARIA Program Manager completed and has been certified in both the Tenant Rights and Responsibilities training, as well as the CTI model.

9. Describe your plan to ensure staff are mobile and able to meet with families at a location convenient to family and/or to transport families to view alternative housing and assist with moving, if necessary.

In the proposed budget, Familylinks is including two dedicated vehicles for the Homeless Prevention Program to utilize to ensure that staff are mobile and able to meet with families at a location convenient to the family and/or to transport families to view alternative housing. Upon the first interaction with the participants, the Housing Specialist will discuss with the participants a safe and accessible location to meet for an eligibility screening. Familylinks has offices throughout Allegheny County that can also be utilized for a first meeting. If necessary, the staff transport the participants in the proposed vehicles to an office or an agreed upon location. Staff will also be able to offer tickets for public transportation, if preferred, and the staff can use their personal vehicles to meet the participants at an agreed upon location.

In terms of assisting families in need of moving, Familylinks is budgeting into this RFP to assist families with necessary moving costs. It is the intention of Familylinks to utilize funds to access either a moving company or moving trucks to assist families in the moving process, as warranted.

### **Housing Services Expertise (35 points possible)**

10. Describe your organizational knowledge of and experience in navigating affordable housing resources, including Housing Choice vouchers and public housing systems.

Familylinks, as an agency, has provided homeless services to the greater Pittsburgh region for over 20 years. Most recently, the CHP and the ARIA Program have been working to build a network of landlords who will rent to people in programs, as well as building a network of community supports. When eligible, the programs have referred clients to the Housing Choice

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Homeless Preference Voucher Program. As a part of these programs, the Housing Specialists will complete the application for the client. The Housing Specialist and Program Manager may then attend the appointments with the clients, walking alongside them through every step of the process. Furthermore, the Housing Specialist will work to obtain letters of support, when possible, prior to the client's initial appointment with the Housing Authority. If the client is still denied their voucher, the Housing Specialist and the Program Manager will attend the appeal hearings to advocate on behalf of the client, when appropriate. In situations where a client decides to reside outside of the city limits, the program staff have worked through the voucher porting process from the City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority to the County Housing Authority. In addition, the program staff work with landlords to help prepare and educate them on the expectations of a Housing Choice Voucher inspection for their units.

In addition to the Housing Voucher Program, the Familylinks Housing Team also has experience working with various public housing/subsidized housing options. The Housing Team is able to pair households with eligible public housing options and assist in the application process. With over 20 years of experience in Allegheny County, Familylinks staff have strong expertise and an expansive knowledge base of public housing resources throughout the County.

11. Describe your organizational knowledge of and ability to help procure necessary documentation for vouchers, public housing and other rental arrangements.

Prior to the eligibility screening, which is the first meeting with potential participants for the housing programs, staff requests copies all necessary documentation for housing. These documents include valid identification for adults in the household, copies of birth certificates for all household members, copies of social security cards, copies of income and assets/bank accounts, as well as copies of back due balances to utility companies and landlords. If the prospective client(s) does not possess these documents at the time of program acceptance, a plan is created with the Housing Specialist and the client to acquire these documents for housing purposes, as soon as possible. If necessary, the program may pay the fees for the client.

In addition to acquiring the above identified documents, the Housing Specialist will ask the client(s) at the eligibility screening to disclose any criminal charges and evictions. Additionally, the Housing Specialist conducts a search through the Pennsylvania Docket Sheets Portal to ensure the client is aware of their background, and any charges or fees owed the client may not be aware of. If there is money owed to a previous landlord, the Housing Specialist will work with the client(s) to set up a payment plan to pay back debt.

Finally, the Housing Specialist collaborates with the client(s) formal and natural supports to obtain letters of support, letters of recommendation, and program completion certificates to better advocate on behalf of the client in cases where voucher or housing denials are possible.

12. Describe challenges you anticipate encountering while working with difficult-to-house families, your experience with these challenges and your plan to mitigate them. How might you collaborate with DHS's Housing Navigator Unit in such situations?

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In Familylinks' extensive history, our housing team has worked with numerous families who have various housing barriers to successful secure housing for these families. Some of these barriers include:

- Criminal charges/background
- Recent evictions
- Extensive eviction history
- Education around budgeting and housing affordability
- Availability of affordable housing areas and units
- Lack of a livable wage or income
- Concerns around lease violations and good tenant practices

When staff first meet with participants, they complete a housing assessment to begin discussion around the barriers and what the participant is looking for in a housing unit. Staff will discuss all of these areas with the participant to create a service plan.

Staff will sit with the participant and complete a search utilizing the Allegheny County Docket sheet website. This allows the staff and the participant to gain an understanding of criminal charges, outcomes of the charges, a list of their evictions, and how much is owed.

Where applicable, the Housing Specialists will contact former landlords to set up payment arrangements for arrearages of rent. This often satisfies requirements with public housing options for the client to be able to apply for a new unit.

When meeting with new landlords in the private market, the housing staff has encountered that some landlords are willing to work with "hard to house" clients if they are informed of the history, are ensured that the participant has support of a program, and that they are able to contact the program if any concerns arise with the tenant. There currently is an established network of landlords who actively work with the program. They understand the needs of the participants and work with these hard to house populations.

The Housing Team also has experience working with the participants around education. Ongoing conversations and meetings occur between the Housing Team and the participants to discuss realistic housing expectations. The programs currently follow the practice of only renting units that are below or meet the Fair Market Rent standards. Participants will not be offered units that are above their financial means. At times, this means that participants are asked to re-evaluate their wish-lists. Conversation and education topics can include:

- The size of the unit needed (discussing children in the household sharing rooms, re-evaluating a need for additional living spaces such as a separate dining area)
- Opening their housing search areas to include additional neighborhoods that are more accessible or affordable. This discussion at times asks the clients to look at units that they could see themselves living in for a few years until they are able to afford their first choice of a neighborhood or a larger unit.
- Compromising on desirable aspects of a unit including: smoking policies, pet policies, onsite laundry facilities, guest visitation policies, single family unit vs housing complexes, outdoor living spaces, etc.
- Developing a budget with the client for the client to understand what they are able to afford, and evaluating any areas where they can cut expenses.

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- Good tenant policies. Examples of these discussions have included: cleaning practices, paying the rent and utilities on time and in full, guest visitation violations, pet violations, smoking and drug use policies, reporting problems with the unit in a timely manner, preventative conversations with their landlord regarding late payments, noise concerns and expectations, etc.

Finally, the Housing Team at Familylinks has an established relationship working relationship with the Housing Navigation Unit. When working with participants who have multiple barriers, the Familylinks Housing Team reaches out to the Housing Navigators to ask for additional resources. Upon launch of the Housing Navigation team, the ARIA Program Manager collaborated with the Navigators to discuss gaps in housing services within the continuum. The ARIA Program Manger also collaborated with the Housing Navigation Unit to host a Rapid Re-Housing Community of Practice meeting for all providers in July, at Familylinks' training facility.

13. Describe your plan to develop personalized lists of viable housing options that meet the needs of each family.

The Familylinks Housing Team continues to develop a database of landlords throughout Allegheny County who are able to meet various needs of our participants. A portion of the Housing Team's time will be utilized to continue to grow this network. The Housing Team is trained on how to market our programs to potential landlords. An information packet for potential landlords has been developed and distributed when new landlords are identified. The Housing Team will also participate in landlord recruitment events in collaboration with the Housing Alliance and the Housing Navigation Team.

When contacting a new landlord during a housing search, the Familylinks staff will discuss with the potential landlord the benefits of working with programs. This can include having a professional staff person to contact with tenant concerns, access to the Landlord Mitigation Fund through Allegheny County's Housing Navigation Unit, a guaranteed payment for security deposit or rent, as well as the benefits of creating neighborhoods that welcome a diverse group of residents.

In addition to the Landlord Mitigation Fund offered through the County, Familylinks plans to add in their own Landlord Mitigation Reserve for the OCYF Homeless Prevention Program. This cost will be a part of the Client Financial Assistance. This will only be available to incentivize landlords to provide housing to the OCYF Homeless Prevention Program in situations where there are multiple barriers to housing. The fund can offer up to an additional \$500 if a program participant does excessive damage or skips a rental payment. Prior to signing the lease with a landlord, the Housing Specialist will need to collect their application and a passing unit inspection must be completed. Any existing damage or concerns must be documented. The Housing Specialist will submit the application to the Program Manager for approval. If approved, the application is valid for 1 year. Claims must be submitted prior to the end of a 1 year lease. The claim must be submitted by the landlord to the program. The program will determine if the claim meets the requirements for payment. If the claim is approved, the funds can be paid directly from the OCYF Homeless Prevention Landlord Mitigation Reserve.



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Landlords who did not submit an application for the Mitigation Reserve at the start of the lease will not be considered for later payment.

The Housing Team is then able to add new landlords to the exiting database, which outlines the type and size of housing available, the areas available, how many units each landlord owns, and any stipulations the landlord may have.

14. Describe your plan to provide transportation for families to appointments to view, submit applications for and obtain housing.

As discussed in question 9, the proposed budget for this program would include two dedicated vehicles for the Homeless Prevention Program to utilize. Where needed, the staff will have access to transport the participants in the proposed vehicles to view units, submit applications, obtain information and documents for housing, and to sign leases. If preferred, staff will also be able to offer tickets for public transportation and staff can use their personal vehicles to meet the participants at an agreed upon location.

15. Describe your plan to deliver housing education, including how to meet reasonable expectations of landlords or property managers, tenant rights, and positive interactions with landlords and property managers.

The Housing Specialists and the Trainer will work in collaboration to develop an education workshop for the approved program participants. Upon the Prevention Staff's hire, they will be asked to complete the course which is offered in a train the trainer format. They will then build the curriculum for the participants and make necessary ongoing updates, as necessary.

Upon eligibility screening with a household, the Housing Specialist will identify participants who could benefit from further education and make a referral to complete the in-house workshop. Identified participants will be asked to earn a certificate of completion. The topics for the workshop will be designed from the Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania (PREP). This program covers topics such as: affordability, understanding how much rent you can afford, how to deal with a negative past rental, criminal and or credit history, locating potential housing, dealing with difficult neighbors, how to address problems with you landlord and more. Pamphlets, workbooks and education materials will be offered to all Prevention participants throughout their time in the program.

Finally, Familylinks will work with families to educate them on the importance of positive interactions with landlords and property managers. Housing Specialists will consistently observe each participant's need throughout their enrollment and can offer 1:1 coaching in real-life situations, when needed.

### **Budget (25 points possible, not included in page count)**

16. Provide a detailed line item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining the Homeless Prevention Services and a budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies the line items in the proposed budget, with specific detail

## **RFP for Homeless Prevention Services for Child Welfare-Active Families**

related to staff salaries and benefits, travel, training, financial assistance for families (security deposit, utility arrearages, first month and/or arrearage rent), operating costs and other expenses. You may provide the budget and budget narrative as an attachment (e.g., Excel document) or in the space below.

See attachments for budget and budget narrative.

Familylinks Budget				
Homeless Prevention Services for Child Welfare-Active Families				
		Comments	Wages	FTE req
Annual				
<b>Personnel Costs</b>				
<b>Direct</b>				
	Program Manager		49,000	1
	Housing Specialists	(\$18 / hr)	37,440	3
	Legal advocate	1 FTE = 2 hours of assistance / client	40,000	0.5
	Client Education / trainer	housing education / budgeting	43,680	0.25
	Emergency Stipends	\$100 per week for being on-call		
	Overtime		12%	6,739
	<b>Total Direct</b>			<b>4.75</b>
				<b>217,658</b>
<b>Indirect</b>				
	Youth and Family Services Director		91,860	0.1
	Senior Program Manager		63,762	0.1
	Disbursement Coordinator	rapid disbursement of ave of 50 cks per week	39,520	0.5
	Admin Support	(\$14 / hr)	29,120	1
	<b>Total Indirect</b>			
				<b>64,442</b>
<b>Taxes and Benefits</b>				
	FICA		7.65%	
	SUI		0.86%	
	Worker Comp		1.35%	
	Disability		0.80%	
	Life Insurance		0.22%	
	Health, Vision, Dental (net of ee cont)		16.54%	
	Pension		1.00%	
	Employee Assistance / Wellness prog		0.09%	
	Clearances		0.05%	
	<b>Total Taxes and Benefits</b>		<b>28.56%</b>	
				<b>80,568</b>
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>				
				<b>362,668</b>
<b>Professional fees</b>				
		contracted legal or other client prof support	\$200 / 1 hr / wk	
				<b>10,400</b>
<b>Client Financial Assistance</b>				
		expected ave disbursement of \$525 per client / family		
				<b>472,500</b>
<b>Occupancy</b>				
		10% of Shady Avenue office		
				<b>16,500</b>
<b>Communications / Technology</b>				
	Laptop Purchase	6 x \$800		
	Hot Spots	\$30 purchase + \$40 / month / device		
	Cell phone usage	\$50 / month / phone		
	Data Communication Services	allocation of Shady costs		
	<b>Total Communications / Technology</b>			
				<b>10,850</b>
<b>Other</b>				
	Leased vehicles	2 dedicated autos @ \$325 / month		
	Vehicle gas / insurance	\$60 / wk / vehicle		
	Staff Travel	\$750 / month		
	Staff Training / Development	\$1,000 / staff		
	Program Supplies	\$10 / client		
	Membership fees	ie. Housing Alliance		
	Office Supplies	\$25 / month / staff		
	Insurance	\$250 / staff for general + \$110 / staff for prof liab		
	Printing	advertising / communications		
	Postage & Shipping	mailings to clients / families / agencies		
	<b>Total Other</b>			
				<b>44,625</b>
<b>Total before Allocated Overheads</b>				
				<b>917,543</b>
<b>Administrative Costs</b>				
	Program and Facility Indirects	40% for QA, Intake, COO, billing, maintenance		
	Administrative Indirects	60% for Finance, HR, IT, CEO		
	<b>Total Administrative</b>			
				<b>80,108</b>
<b>Total Operating and Personnel</b>				
		<b>Year 1</b>		
				<b>\$ 997,650</b>
*	<b>non-recurring start up costs</b>	equipment purchases		
				<b>\$ 4,950</b>
<b>Total Operating and Personnel</b>				
		<b>Ongoing (without start up)</b>		
				<b>\$ 992,700</b>

**FAMILYLINKS – BUDGET NARRATIVE**  
**HOMELESS PREVENTION SERVICES FOR CHILD WELFARE-ACTIVE FAMILIES**

OVERVIEW

Budget is proposed based on the following:

- Homeless Prevention Services are provided to 900 child-welfare active families annually
- Families are based in Allegheny County
- Staffed with experienced Housing Specialists
- Services will be mobile and immediately responsive to client needs
- The budgeted amounts represent annual expenditures with the exception of certain start up equipment costs which have been identified

LINE ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

1. Personnel Costs:
  - a. 4.75 direct service personnel as described under the staffing section of the proposal and detailed on the budget schedule
  - b. Management oversight is provided by .1 FTE Director of Youth and Family Services as well as an additional .1 FTE of a Senior Program Manager. (1 FTE Program Manager is included in the 4.75 direct service personnel in a.)
  - c. Emergency Stipends are paid for the staff providing “on call” emergency response services at \$100 per week
  - d. Overtime for hourly employees is assumed at 12%
2. Employee Benefits are inclusive of:
  - a. FICA, Health Insurance, Vision Insurance, Life Insurance, Disability Insurance, Dental Insurance, Workers Compensation Insurance, Pension, Unemployment, Employee Assistance, Clearances.
  - b. Employees Benefits are budgeted on a percentage of payroll allocated to the program. The employee benefit percentages for next fiscal year is 28.56%.
3. Professional fees:
  - a. Contracted legal or other client professional support for complex issues or litigation beyond the capacity of the legal advocate. Assumed 1 hour needed per week at \$200 per hour.
4. Client Financial Assistance
  - a. Direct Financial payments to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties on behalf of client to resolve arrearages, down payments, security deposits, application fees, moving expenses, client transportation and necessary supplies. Assumed at \$525 per client.
5. Occupancy:
  - a. Requirements for office space are pertain to the administration and management of the program. Office space will be provided within Familylinks Shady

Avenue location. The rent is an allocation of all occupancy related costs based on square footage utilized by each of the programs. Homeless Prevention space requirements are 10% of the Shady Avenue location.

6. Communications / Technology:
  - a. Laptop purchases are budgeted for the program manager, 3 housing specialists, legal advocate and disbursement coordinator at \$800 each.
  - b. Hot spots for internet access are budgeted for the mobile personnel including a \$30 purchase price per device and a \$40 per month fee.
  - c. Cell phone usage is budgeted at \$50 month for the Program Manager, Housing Specialists and Legal Advocate.
  - d. Data Communication is an allocation of costs in the Shadyside office for internet and other network access.
  
7. Other:
  - a. Leased vehicles are for 2 autos to provide mobile services to clients, and drive clients to evaluate housing options.
  - b. Gas and insurance for autos budgeted at \$60 per week per vehicle.
  - c. Staff travel is budgeted at \$750 per month for reimbursement for travel to meetings or conferences or use of personal vehicle when the agency vehicles are fully utilized.
  - d. Staff Training / Development for conferences and training on relevant Housing topics and issues.
  - e. Program supplies include printed education materials averaging \$10 per client
  - f. Membership fees include participating in the Housing Alliance and other relevant organizations.
  - g. Office supplies used in the day-to-day operations budgeted at \$25 per month per staff.
  - h. Insurance includes general and professional liability budgeted at \$360 per staff
  - i. Printing includes promotional materials and other client communications
  - j. Postage and shipping includes mailing and other deliveries to clients, families or other supporting agencies
  
8. Indirect Program Support and Facilities Costs:
  - i. Program Support is inclusive of staff salaries, benefits, and other costs associated on an agency wide basis with Central Intake, Program Receptionists, Director of Quality Assurance, Chief Operating Officer, Asst to Chief Operating Officer, Training Department (Agency and Staff), Billing Department and Community Education. Total Agency wide costs are for program support are approximately \$1.2 million and are allocated by FTE's
  - ii. Facility operations cost are allocated based on the square foot usage of the related properties. Agency wide costs total \$428,000
  - iii. Costs allocated to this program for facilities and program support are budgeted to be \$32,043.

9. Indirect Administrative Expenses:
  - a. Agency wide costs which are inclusive of staff salaries, benefits, and other costs associated with Executive Administration, Fiscal, Human Resources and Information Technology.
  - b. Agency wide administrative expenses total approximately \$2.2 million. Costs allocated to 6.95 FTEs total \$48,065.