



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

Foster Care Agencies

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Merakey Pennsylvania

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Rebecca Mann, Senior Vice President, Children & Families Services

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Website: www.merakey.org

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

Date Incorporated: 11/08/1994

Partners and/or Subcontractors included in this Proposal: N/A

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* Allegheny County Solicitations website

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Joseph Martz	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Contract Processing Contact	Eben Wilson	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Information Officer	Tom Morgan	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Financial Officer	Derrick Yacovelli	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
MPER Contact*	Crystal Kaylor	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

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

BOARD INFORMATION

Please see Attachment One.

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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.*

- 1) Daniel E. Eisenhauer, Administrator
Dauphin County Mental Health/Autism/Developmental Programs
[REDACTED]
Phone [REDACTED]
- 2) Julie K. Brown, LCSW, Delaware County Senior Account Executive
Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania
[REDACTED]
Phone [REDACTED]
- 3) Thomas Patterson, Children, Youth and Families Director
Potter County Human Services
[REDACTED]

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted 2/9/2021

Amount Requested: \$1,848,698

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, HIPAA and Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law.

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.

Choose one:

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My Proposal contains information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and I have included a written statement signed by an authorized representative identifying those portions or parts of my Proposal and providing contact information.

OR

My Proposal does not contain information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information.

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
- Organizational Chart
- Implementation Timeline
- Line-item Budget, if desired

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REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is **250** points. Your response to this section should not exceed 30 pages.

Organizational Experience and Capacity (30 points)

1. Describe your organization's demonstrated experience working with the following populations: children from birth up to their 21st birthday who are at-risk or involved with the child welfare system; prospective and current Foster Care parents; birth parents; and all other stakeholders in Foster Care (e.g., court system, DHS caseworkers, other provider agencies), or an equivalent. Include how the input of children, Foster Care parents and birth parents have been incorporated into this Proposal.

Since 1996, Merakey has cared for thousands of dependent children and older youth and provides a full continuum of care across the Commonwealth through our Children and Families division, with consistent growth in this service line every year since its inception. This speaks to the satisfaction with programming and ability to recruit, retain and grow homes to support the needs of our stakeholders. Merakey's Therapeutic Foster Care (CRR-HH), Foster Care Plus, Kinship Care, and Mother/Child and Emergency Foster Care programs in Pennsylvania operate out of 15 program sites and supports almost 300 foster homes that care for over 400 children and youth. Our Therapeutic Family Care (TFC) program was developed to help meet the mental and behavioral health needs of youth in foster care, many of whom have complex needs and involvement in multiple systems. Merakey has operated these programs in both private home settings as well as in group home formats. As child welfare and children's behavioral trends have shifted away from residential placements, our FCP/TFC program has grown and increased capacity to care for youth with challenging behaviors. We use feedback received from resource parents, children, and birth parents, and all other stakeholders to shape our programs to ensure we are meeting the unique needs of the families we serve.

Merakey currently serves six (6) children in Allegheny County and is anticipating expanding services with the addition of a recruiting position. The staff that supports these families and children are critical to program success. The team coordinates all services for the child, provides referrals to and collaboration with clinical treatment providers, monitors foster home compliance, facilitates family visits/involvement, and communicates with all necessary team members.

Merakey is also contracted with Diakon and the State-Wide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) to provide permanency services.

2. Describe your organization's demonstrated experience working with communities and populations that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, culture and SOGIE and reflective of the target population.

Throughout all programs, Merakey's clients and workforce are made of up culturally diverse individuals. Lack of awareness about cultural differences can make it difficult for both providers and consumers to achieve the best, most appropriate care. Despite our similarities, fundamental

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differences among people arise from nationality, ethnicity, and culture, as well as from family background and individual experiences. These differences affect health beliefs, practices, and behaviors that both consumers and providers have of each other. Diversity is one of Merakey's core values and is at the heart of all the services we deliver. Merakey's Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council leads the Merakey culture in building and sustaining an inclusive culture that encourages, supports, and advocates for the diverse voices of our employees and the individuals we serve. The size and diversity of Merakey affords service recipients and staff within the program the benefit of a network of experienced professionals and programming, training, and technological support. Merakey's matrix management structure of service line leadership allows for training, interventions, skills building, and treatment planning around areas of Behavioral Health, IDD, Autism Spectrum, Forensics, Addictions and Children, Youth and Families. These service line experts, along with operations managers, can pull together resources to ensure that specialized needs are addressed by a multi-system approach.

Merakey has a variety of previous and ongoing experience with diversity and inclusion initiatives. Below is a concise list of current and previously established Merakey initiatives:

- Merakey developed and initiated a formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council in 2018 with accompanying strategic plan to guide the initiative annually. Led by its purpose statement "An open heart has room for everyone", we celebrate diversity and encourage everyone to reach their fullest potential – all races, ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, and experiences. Additionally, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion are also incorporated into the Merakey organizational strategic plan identifying the need as one of the five key pillars of the organization
- Merakey formed a diversity and inclusion advisory committee in 2019 to create an additional body of engaged employees to solicit the interest and expertise of a greater number of employees, conducting an organization wide cultural competency assessment with commitment to complete every two years.
- Merakey regularly provides events and learning opportunities that foster healthy dialogue for employees, including utilization of literature for reading and review; diversity awareness trivia; and a courageous conversation video conferencing series with focuses on unconscious bias, code switching, microaggressions, etc.
- Merakey-wide townhalls focused on racial injustice and specifically in response to the Black Lives Matter movement
- Regular company communications responding to current events, such as the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor. These communications accentuate Merakey's commitment to combatting inequality and standing in solidarity in the fight for just and equality for all black lives.
- Weekly film & dialogue series focused on inequality topics, diversity, equality, and inclusion
- Implementation of employee resource groups dedicated to the topic of diversity, equality, and inclusion with a specific resource group in the Pittsburgh area for Black/African American Merakey employees
- Implementation of Merakey Supplier Diversity Program focused on increasing support of businesses owned/operated by historically marginalized groups
- Implementation of unconscious bias training across all of Merakey

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Although these Merakey corporate initiatives have been a start, we look forward to the possibility of having more of a connection to the local Allegheny County initiatives that will allow us to better partner with our local stakeholders, other providers, and community to make an impactful change in the services delivered within Allegheny County.

3. Provide clear reasoning why your organization feels it is a strong candidate for this opportunity and how Foster Care fits well within your organization's mission.

Merakey USA, parent company to Merakey Pennsylvania, is one of the largest non-profit providers of community based behavioral health services, and services for individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities in the country. As a leader in the human service field for 50 years, Merakey has a rich history of designing and implementing community-based supports for individuals who have been diagnosed with serious and persistent mental illness and who are experiencing co-occurring issues such as substance abuse, forensic involvement, traumatic brain injury and developmental disabilities. More than 10,000 staff provide services to almost 50,000 consumers throughout 11 states.

Merakey Pennsylvania provides a comprehensive continuum of children's services throughout the commonwealth. Services offered include an open-access outpatient clinic, Intensive Behavioral Health Services, therapeutic preschool, drug-free drug & alcohol treatment, case management and school therapeutic services. For more than ten years, it has been transforming its services and training staff to be person-centered, recovery/resiliency oriented, trauma responsive, and focused on supporting individuals' strengths and competencies to choose and live the life that they want in the community. The future of our services will continue to be driven by the needs of the local communities we serve and will be characterized by strong partnerships with community stakeholders and be grounded in best practices.

Merakey's purpose statement, "Putting our heart and soul into exceptional care", serves as a foundation for our company vision, "To be a nationally recognized provider of the highest quality health and human services", and our core values which include compassion, diversity, integrity, quality, safety, and trust. We believe that all adolescents and young adults have strengths and visions that equate to freedoms and self-sufficiency, and that mobilizing and supporting strengths is the most effective approach to support these individual's through their transition to adulthood. Merakey Foster Care programs take a holistic, strengths-based approach to successfully maintain individuals within their community and support their development. Merakey recognizes and understands the role of trauma in the lives of youth and adolescents and uses trauma informed, therapeutic behavioral strategies. Our objective is to create compassionate, trusting, and collaborative relationships in which individuals feel safe physically, psychologically, morally and socially.

The work of Merakey is anchored in the firm belief that it is every individual's right to achieve growth, dignity, and fulfillment in their lives. Surrounding professional staff with the best in technology and supports, Merakey is a leader in the industry and remains committed to helping people...one individual at a time.

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4. Provide the number of homes and total bed capacity you anticipate being able to maintain at any given time. Be specific about the number of homes you anticipate being best equipped to care for different child demographics and other characteristics (e.g., infants, teenagers, Therapeutic Foster Care, LGBTQIA+ individuals).

Merakey currently serves six (6) youth from Allegheny county. There is currently one (1) home that is open in Allegheny county that serves as a Respite home. Throughout the counties surrounding Allegheny, Merakey has 30 beds available across 11 homes to take referrals from Allegheny county, depending on needs and openings.

With a targeted recruitment plan and a position designed to focus on recruitment, foster family support, training, and onboarding, Merakey would aim to open at least two (2) homes per quarter. The trainings provided to these families would equip them to support youth with different demographics and other characteristics. The size and diverse populations Merakey serves will allow this program the opportunity to rely on internal subject matter experts as needed to provide additional support and/or trainings to equip foster parents with the tools necessary to successfully support youth with special needs in their homes.

To assist in attracting quality resource parents, Merakey will compensate their families with competitive rates. We will begin reimbursing our families at \$65.00 per day for TFC families and \$40.00 per day for FCP families.

In addition, Merakey maintain a state-wide network of approximately 400 beds managed by 15 different foster care program licenses, all reporting up through the foster care service line leadership structure. This allows beds throughout the state to be used for placement needs, either when something closer is desirable but unavailable, or a specific outlying area is needed for a placement (for example, the need to license and support an available kinship resource for an Allegheny County child). On any given day, we are working with potential resource parents to move through the approval process, opening more beds each month that represent the diversity of the client population.

Promoting Placement Stability (60 points)

5. Describe your plan for *recruitment* of diverse, culturally humble Foster Care families who will provide high-quality and trauma-informed care and safety for children. Please include:
 - a. Specifics about which populations you will target.
 - b. The strategies you will use to ensure your Foster Care families are diverse and culturally humble.
 - c. The recruitment staffing strategy, specific roles and number of staff involved in the recruitment of Foster Care families.
 - d. The specific recruitment strategies you will use for Emergency Placement Homes, Respite Homes and Emergency Respite Homes.
 - e. How you will incorporate a “customer service” approach.
 - f. How you include matching events and preplacement visits in your approach.

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Merakey's current foster care programs have had success with recruiting, retaining, and training by having a staff solely designated for this purpose, titled Foster Parent Recruiter. This program structure will be replicated by adding a full time Foster Parent Recruiter to specifically work in Allegheny County and surrounding areas. Recruitment efforts will be focused on recruiting resource parents from the communities where needs are to minimize disruption, keep youth in their home communities, as well as ensure that the resource parents are reflective of the community to maximize cultural and linguistic compatibility. The recruiter will communicate and work with Children and Youth staff and Allegheny County to identify targeted recruitment strategies, including but not limited to: grassroots marketing techniques, attending community and vendor events, partnering with local civic and religious organizations, sponsoring meal events for interested parties, and utilizing already-existing partnerships and resources to increase interest. Merakey recognizes that current families are a great tool in recruitment efforts and offers a "referral bonus" for any families that refer a family that completes the approval process with Merakey.

The Foster Parent Recruiter will be used to complete recruitment strategies listed above, provide initial and ongoing trainings, and walk candidates through the approval process. Upon completion of the approval process, the Foster Parent Recruiter will essentially "hand over" the approved family to the program so that referrals can be reviewed and matched with the approved family. A lead recruiter also facilitates a monthly Foster Parent Recruiter call to assist with identifying marketing/recruitment ideas and to process barriers that are preventing a family from moving through the approval process.

Screening and training of potential resource parent candidates will ensure tolerance and affirmation for the diverse groups of children referred; company policies mandate a person-centered, recovery-oriented approach to everything we do (which includes acceptance of all individuals, regardless of their background or identity). Merakey does not discriminate in recruiting and licensure of employees or resource parents and does not tolerate discrimination in any form for employees or individuals served (including but not limited to race/ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity).

6. Describe specific efforts you will take and approaches you will use to *retain* foster parents, including Foster Care parents who have Emergency Placement Homes, Respite Homes and/or Emergency Respite Homes. Include how support will be available to Foster Care parents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition to the comprehensive training plan that provides resource parents with knowledge and skills to provide a safe nurturing home environment for children in their care, Merakey also offers monthly resource parent support groups and sufficient staff supports within the program structure to monitor family stress levels and to ensure resource families have what they need to succeed. There are also a number of different processes that Merakey has in place to provide additional assistance for children or resource parents who may be struggling; these include, but are not limited to, presenting a case at clinical case review, requesting a peer review, a robust behavioral health continuum that is capable of rapidly wrapping supports around a child when the current level of support is insufficient, and a strong statewide foster care product line team involving program supervisors and subject matter experts who bring a wealth of experience and expertise that resource

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parents can tap into at any time. Resource parents will be encouraged to actively partner with behavioral health providers (Merakey or otherwise) via participation in treatment/reunification activities such as treatment plan development and review, team meetings, family therapy sessions, and regular communication in to successfully meet the child's needs and support IOC. Resource parents will never feel like they must cope with a challenging situation on their own.

Beyond providing resource families with trainings needed to be successful, Merakey staff will meet with the youth and resource family a minimum of twice per month for at least one hour each session. These sessions will be used to provide support to the resource family, assess for safety, engage in skill building activities with the youth and resource family, monitor stress levels in the resource home and to ensure that the resource family has what they need to be successful in supporting the youth and their natural family.

For youth placed in the TFC program, a weekly individual therapy session will occur by a master's level clinician in addition to the bimonthly sessions identified above. The same clinician will provide biweekly family therapy to include the youth and the identified discharge resource.

Resource families will have access to Merakey staff 24/7 via an on-call support component should there be a crisis situation. On call support will assist with de-escalation of a crisis situation via a phone call or a face to face contact if the situation is not able to be de-escalated over the phone.

Merakey will host monthly resource parent support groups where clinical support is offered in a group setting along with training hours. Support groups will be facilitated by Merakey staff but driven by needs identified by resource families.

To ensure that families continue to feel competent in accepting placements, Merakey will require ongoing training hours each year as part of the reapproval process.

7. Please describe a plan for facilitating peer supports for Foster Care parents. This may include strategies, a specific model (such as the Mockingbird Model) or informal mechanisms, and be based on common challenges, geography or something else.
 - a. Where you see fit, include innovative solutions that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 (e.g., videoconferencing, virtual visits).

Merakey has robust peer programs that are integrated into multiple programs throughout the commonwealth, in addition to stand alone peer programs. As such, we understand the unequivocal value that peer support plays and the importance of having someone to turn to who has been in a similar situation. Merakey will use components of peer support programs to set up mentoring and partnerships within the foster parent community, the mentor will be matched with the potential foster parent from the time the application is received to begin the development of the mentor relationship.

The mentor will work with the foster parent applicant through the entire approval process and will continue after the approval has occurred. The mentor will be available to the "new foster parent"

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to assist with questions, supporting the youth in the home and provide respite if there is room available in their home.

The mentor will be reimbursed a stipend annually based on the support they provide the “new foster family.” The stipend will be above and beyond the mentor’s daily rate and is intended as a thank you for going above and beyond.

The mentorship program is in addition to monthly parent support groups facilitated by Merakey staff. The ability to use Zoom and other video equipment allows for geographic barriers to be removed and allows more parents to connect in real time methods.

8. Describe your process and timeline for Foster Care Home approval. If your anticipated timeline will routinely take more than three months for approval from receipt of application, please explain.

The Foster Parent Recruiter will have flexibility in their schedule to ensure that individual needs are met with each family. The ability to be flexible in offering trainings and support will lead to timely thorough approvals. The ability to meet the potential family where they are in their lives and schedules will also assist in developing a supportive rapport upon the initial interaction.

The rapport and relationship that is developed throughout the approval process will assist the program with understanding the resource family’s composition, structure, and lifestyle, which is essential to matching referrals with available and appropriate homes, minimizing placement disruptions. When admissions are pre-planned, the program staff will review all available documentation on the child’s history and, in consultation with the foster care team, decide on the best-matched home. In the event that time allows, efforts will be made to support a preplacement visit or preplacement phone call(s) to occur to allow for the youth and resource family to begin developing a relationship with one another.

Once an application is received locally, the agency will contact the applicant within three (3) business days. From the date of initial contact with an applicant, the process for disposition of an application normally will take no more than three (3) months with full applicant cooperation in processing necessary paperwork.

Promoting Well-Being (65 points)

9. Provide a detailed pre-service and ongoing training plan for Foster Care parents that emphasizes cultural humility and includes all required and relevant topic areas.

For successful placement and reunification to occur, Merakey will provide all TFC Resource Parents with 40 pre-service training hours. Annually thereafter, TFC primary resource parents will receive 40 hours the secondary parent will receive 20 hours. A blended curriculum of both online and in-person trainings will consist of behaviorally based parent training, de-escalation techniques, regulatory requirements, and mental health topics. For parents providing “traditional foster care”, both the primary and secondary resource parents will be required to have 20 hours of preservice

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trainings. For reapprovals, the primary parent will be required to have 20 hours of annual training and the secondary parent will be required to have 10 hours of annual training.

Additional initial and annual trainings include CPR, First Aid, de-escalation techniques, Compliance, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Child Protective Services Law, PI Defensive Driving, Adult Protective Services, HIPAA, Establishing and Maintaining Professional Boundaries, Sexual Harassment Prevention Made Simple, and Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard Training.

It is the goal of Merakey to use trauma informed, therapeutic, positive behavioral strategies in supporting the individuals we serve. Merakey has the objective of creating compassionate, trusting, and collaborative relationships in which individuals feel safe, including physical, psychological, moral, and social safety. Trauma awareness and sensitivity was launched as a company-wide initiative in 2015 as a top-down approach saturated into all organization levels. It manifested in a number of ways, including funds made available to programs for promotion of a more trauma-sensitive physical environment; mandatory trauma awareness and sensitivity training for all staff, not just direct care or clinical; assuming the presence of trauma; formation of trauma committees at various locations to solicit feedback and enact solutions to improve gaps in trauma awareness and sensitivity; avoidance of inadvertent re-traumatization; and an emphasis on the use of evidence-based practices to address trauma, such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT). Merakey's training plan for foster care includes a trauma-informed care element which will be reinforced through ongoing supervision, training, and resource parent support groups.

10. Describe your plan to facilitate co-parenting between birth parents and Foster Care parents, including how you will connect these people as early on as possible after a new placement is established.

Regular contacts between the resource family and the natural family provide opportunities for mentoring and skill transference. Through regular visits and phone calls with the natural family, resource parents will be able to provide coaching on and role modeling of communication strategies, positive discipline and structure, redirection techniques, reflective listening, and collaborative problem solving. These areas will be reinforced by the program staff as well as other involved providers, in order to maintain consistent focus on ensuring that IOC goals will be met, and permanent reunification will ensue.

Merakey staff will also support an in-person meeting, when applicable, between the resource parents and the natural/discharge family. This meeting will act as an ice breaker and will allow for each family (the resource family and the natural family) to begin to develop a supportive collaborative relationship, leading to successful reunification. In addition, the IFSS program component proposed in the next section takes that even further, by having the resource family act as a mentor for the natural family and allowing for seamless shifts in placement based on the child and natural/discharge family's needs.

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11. Provide a detailed plan for establishing and sustaining Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) homes.

Please include:

- a. The standards of the specific model you intend to use and why you chose it.
- b. How you will implement the model, including specifics about the development and use of treatment plans at the client level.
- c. How your organizational capacity and infrastructure will be able meet all model standards and train and support Foster Care parents.
- d. Your proposed process and timeline to establish between 30% and 50% of your Foster Care homes as TFC settings.

The primary goal of Merakey Treatment Foster Care (TFC) is to provide a structured, community-based, therapeutic environment within the context of a family, for children or youth who are challenged socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. The resource family, in partnership with a child's natural family, other supports, and providers, will provide services and activities that support the specialized individual mental health treatment needs of the child/youth placed in their home. The services will include strategies and modalities that support the child's permanency goals. The common goal unifying the TFC team will be to stabilize the child's symptoms enough for the child to return home to his/her natural family (or other permanency resource) and build coping skills that allows the reunification/permanency to remain stable. Coping skills and behavioral changes achieved in TFC strengthen the likelihood of accomplishing IOC goals upon discharge from the program. Treatment team and IRSP Meetings occur regularly and will include treatment within the family-based setting, which is necessary for socially integrating the child into a community so that he/she might experience a meaningful and independent life. Merakey's resource families will provide a family-based setting where therapeutic interventions can occur through outside service providers.

The TFC program will utilize a teaming approach to treatment. A team of a master's and a bachelor's level clinician will be assigned to the youth and their family. The master's level clinician will provide weekly therapy, clinical support to the resource parents, family therapy and be responsible for the clinical needs of the youth. The mental health clinician will collaborate with the youth and their family to identify treatment goals and needs. The treatment plan will then be developed with the youth when appropriate and reviewed with all treatment team members.

A provisional treatment plan is created during the intake meeting and is updated to a comprehensive treatment plan within timeframes outlined in local MCO contracts. Individualized treatment plans are developed based upon individual and family strengths and needs, and recommendations from a psychiatric/psychological evaluation. Individualized treatment plans identify strengths of the youth and family, treatment needs, unique behavioral and mental health needs, and steps necessary for moving the family toward reunification. The plans will incorporate the family's competencies to support progress as well as the reunification process. Treatment planning involves the legal guardian, CRR Host Home family, school personnel as available, specialized therapists as appropriate, the youth, case managers, etc. Individualized treatment plans are updated based on the needs of the youth and family, updated concerns/strengths, crisis situations, goal completion, etc. Treatment goals are reviewed monthly by the treatment team members and progress is documented on the Program Specialist Monthly Report.

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The bachelor's level clinician will meet with the youth twice per month to assist with skill building, implementation of treatment interventions and will ensure that all required appointments and supports are in place for the youth to be successful.

The goal of the program will be to approve all families at the TFC level of care to allow for youth that may need to transition between levels of care to remain the identified foster home.

Merakey is also proposing an additional level of care within the presented foster care continuum referred to as Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS). The program will allow Allegheny county to expand upon the youth and families that are being worked with in addition to changing the environments and entry points that families experience. Intensive Family Support Services was developed to assist with meeting the youth and their family in their home to prevent out of home placement but to allow for the youth and family to be matched with a clinical team and approved resource home to be used in the event that the natural family cannot remain together.

Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) is a voluntary, residential-based, direct service that provides intensive support to children and their families. The primary focus of IFSS is the child's reunification with families/guardians, increased family engagement, educational and vocational support, and decrease in placement disruption including diversion of psychiatric hospitalization and other higher levels of care. IFSS service delivery is separated into three phases of treatment and support:

- Assessment
- Out of Home Placement
- Reunification/Transition

Each phase builds on the previous phase, utilizing a person-centered approach and appropriate evidence-based practices, (Trauma Focused – CBT, Attachment Based Family Therapy, Aggression Replacement Therapy, etc.), individualized to meet the needs of each child and their family. The IFSS team meets a minimum of three (3) times per week to review individual cases, monitor treatment plan implementation, and adjust support to meet the needs of the child and family. The team includes the child, the natural family, two (2) bachelor's level supports, a master's level clinician, and a resource family. The resource family serves as a mentor and support to the natural family in addition to having a bed available for the child if needed.

The Assessment phase aims to wrap around the youth and family when there are potential risks that could lead to out of home placement, but the youth can safely remain in their home. Wrapping around the youth and family at this early stage will hopefully prevent the out of home placement from occurring, meaning that this phase of treatment would be skipped but the youth would remain with the same clinical team and supports as they transition through to reunification. If, however, an out of home placement is needed, even if just for respite, the resource family is already a part of the team and therefore better placed to help the child and family feel safe and confident in the process. The Reunification/Transition phase sets the child up to permanently succeed in their home, even if they never left, but still have all the same supports in place.

12. Describe your plan to ensure timely completion of assessments for children in Foster Care through staff training, supervision, and quality assurance.

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Merakey has experience utilizing many assessments for children to ensure that all appropriate resources are available and accessed. These include IRSP, Trauma Assessments, Mood and Feelings Questionnaire, and Internal Assessments. Assessments are conducted upon intake and every six months at minimum.

Upon hire, staff will be trained in the identified assessments including timeframes for completion, updates, and documentation. Information for completion of assessments is gathered through team meetings to ensure that all participants that are involved in the youth's care are able to provide input.

All assessments will be reviewed by the program supervisor or designee and tracked on a tracker to ensure that completion of assessments is prompt and within required timeframes. Chart audits by internal and external staff will be completed to ensure quality services are being provided.

Merakey has a robust quality compliance department that supports programs by assisting with data collection, setting benchmarks for programs to meet, and supporting program standards. If there is an identified deficiency, the program and quality compliance department work together to determine the root cause for the deficiency and to implement a plan to improve service delivery.

Building a High-Quality and Consistent System (15 points)

13. Describe your organization's plan to regularly collect feedback from Foster Care children, parents and families and how you will incorporate it into your Foster Care program and ensure continuous quality improvements. Please include:
- a. How you will collect feedback from children in Foster Care and use it to inform your practice.
 - b. How you will get Foster Care family input to evaluate what supports are needed, and how this feedback will inform changes to practices.

Feedback from Foster Care children, parents, and families is pivotal to evaluating the success of the program, and Merakey is dedicated to ensuring that all voices are heard. Merakey conducts monthly quality call backs, including cross-program, to collect feedback which includes services provided, treatment planning, privacy concerns and data regarding telehealth services.

Quality callbacks are done monthly by program staff. Neighboring programs complete the quality call backs for the site they are paired with to aid in capturing honest and accurate feedback.

14. Describe your process and plan for tracking, entering and reporting data in a timely and accurate manner. Be specific about which staff will be required to perform the data entry, how they will be supervised, monitored and supported and where data entry fits into the overall business process.

The Quality Improvement and Compliance Plans are established by the Merakey Quality and Compliance Organization (QCO) in conjunction with Operational Leadership. The QCO is headed

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by the Vice President of Quality and Compliance who reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer and governing boards. The Corporate Director of Quality Improvement, Corporate Director of Quality Control, Corporate Safety Director, and Corporate Director of Business Integrity and Operations all work together to ensure the ongoing implementation and coordination of QCO activities.

Quality indicators for programs are established based on payer requirements and best practices around quality of services. Each program is required to respond to the data at least quarterly and develop a Measurable Improvement Plan (MIP) when their program percentage falls below the established threshold.

Data is reviewed at all levels of Merakey including locally, regionally and Corporate wide. Local staff review the data for accuracy and completion prior as they submit the data into the EHR and/or data collection tool. Each month Program Leadership, including Program Directors, Regional Directors and the Executive Director meet to review local data. They review PQI Indicators and any external audit results. Measurable improvement plans are also discussed by each Program Director for indicators that fall below threshold as well discussing programmatic trends and themes. During the meeting Incident Reports (IR's), all external or internal are reviewed. Corrective Action Plans (CAP's), safety and local program needs are also reviewed. Regionally, a Quality Improvement lead and specialist provide support to ensure that data is submitted within deadlines set and that all data is present. Summary reports show any indicators that were not measured, anomalies in data, and any sites that did not submit the required data. This is then communicated to operational leadership for follow up. Follow up items can include training recommendations, QI support related to process improvement, refinement to tools to manage program functions or follow up with local leadership regarding areas of need.

Our electronic medical record allows us to pull real-time data reports and to respond to any trends that emerge. Merakey currently measures progress in the following areas of Foster Care:

- Percent of youth discharged to a permanent and positive discharge location after at least 6 months of placement.
- Percent of youth who have had permanent placement moves in excess of 2 over the episode of care.
- Percent of youth having one or more psychiatric inpatient admission during the quarter.

Staffing and Staff Training (40 points)

15. Attach an organizational chart that reflects the positions, including responsibilities and current or desired qualifications, of all staff members involved with all components of operating Foster Care. The attachment is not included in the page count.

Merakey realigned its corporate structure in 2020, creating a dedicated Children & Families division to better focus on and support its children's services. All child welfare services company-wide now fall under a singular point of leadership to maintain a higher level of quality and consistency for this product line. This has already led to better standardization of necessary

RFP for Foster Care Agencies

processes; more efficient use of resources, staffing, and bed availability between programs; and a more targeted effort at developing and promoting new program ideas based on both internally and externally identified needs. Please see Attachment Two for a divisional organizational chart and position descriptions for the Allegheny Foster Care Program.

16. Describe your plan and strategy for recruiting any additional staff needed for Foster Care, or how current staff meets all needs, including the staff who will support TFC homes. Describe past successes using this strategy.

Merakey intends to hire a Foster Care Recruiter to prioritize not just recruiting more resource families, but the right resource families that represent the diverse population of the children being served and who have the right skill sets to support the youth and families in the programs. The Foster Care Recruiter will also support the current resource families through their reapproval process and assist with supporting them as needs arise.

Staffing ratios will be managed by the program director to ensure that youth and families receive the support and services needed to be successful. The program uses a team approach to support the youth and families in the program. Their current staffing structure allows for weekly individual therapy, biweekly family therapy and biweekly skill building sessions.

17. Provide a detailed staff training plan that emphasizes cultural humility and ensures that staff are trained in relevant topic areas, including the changes you will make to the existing training program to meet requirements.

Merakey values the idea of full preparation of all staff for implementing the program philosophies. In doing so, a thorough orientation and comprehensive training plan during the first year of employment is essential, as is ongoing training and development thereafter. Program Specialists and Program Coordinators/Manager must receive Safe Crisis Management, CPR/First Aid, OSHA, HIPAA, and Corporate Integrity training within the first 30 days of employment. Staff must also receive TFC/FCP orientation within 60 days of employment. A Driver Training course must be taken prior to working with clients. All staff will receive a minimum of 40 hours of training during the initial year of employment and must complete 40 hours of related training annually. These trainings must include: Safe Crisis Management and OSHA. Staff are also responsible for keeping their CPR and First Aid certificates current. Monitoring / tracking of staff training requirements occurs on a calendar year.

1) For new hires, calculate the month that the staff person started and what percentage of a full year that is. So, if someone is hired in September, because they only worked 3 of the 12 months that calendar year, they would be required to meet 25% of the requirements.

2) For that same staff, starting in January, full annual requirements would have to be met by 12.31.13.

RFP for Foster Care Agencies

Ongoing training may be obtained through various resources but primarily will consist of classroom instruction. However, pre-approved external resources may also provide staff with additional tools. Staff will be encouraged to participate in relevant pre-approved conferences and seminars. Although other methods of training such as video presentations and online trainings can be beneficial, these must be pre-approved by a supervisor and face-to-face training with an instructor is the “Best Practice” standard.

18. Describe your plan for hiring racially and culturally diverse staff.

Merakey knows the key to providing quality services relies on the employees hired. As such, Merakey’s Recruiting “Center of Excellence” has developed a strategic and proactive approach to talent recruiting. By clearly understanding the business needs, Merakey recruiters prioritize and deliver top talent across the organization to increase quality of care. Merakey’s recruiting department actively works to anticipate the hiring of program needs and reduce vacancies throughout the company to ensure adequate staffing ratios. Reduction in turnover and vacancies was also identified as a 5-year corporate strategic goal with specific operationalized numeric targets, and several initiatives were rolled out in order to address it (including hiring more recruiters, a corporate-wide survey to gather information about what staff are looking for in an employer, additional management training and mentoring, and an annual leadership event with employee retention as the theme). A comprehensive compensation analysis was done for all positions included in the RFP budget submission to ensure that Merakey would be offering competitive salaries to ensure that we are able to attract quality trained staff and minimize turnover.

Merakey’s Recruiting Team function has extensive experience and robust partnerships to find high quality candidates that put their heart and soul into their work. The Talent Acquisition Leadership team has over 40 years in recruiting collectively and most of the Recruiters have their Certified Internet Recruiter (CIR) designation. These skills and background allow the team to create a dynamic candidate centric experience using a three-tier strategy approach:

- Digital- platforms using internet, social media, and other electronic communications.
- Local- community immersion through billboards, radio, and newspapers
- Strategic Partners- collaboration with professional organizations, specialty firms, and diversity groups.

Merakey maintains a balanced work force by recruiting, promoting, and supporting a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area. Recruiters and hiring managers seek staff members that are committed to their community, represent a variety of cultural backgrounds, and are capable of communicating in cross-cultural situations. To ensure a diverse talent pipeline that includes a wide variety of cultures and age groups, Merakey utilizes a variety of job posting boards and maintains partnerships with colleges/universities, fraternities/sororities, and professional organizations including the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, National Black Nurses Association, OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates, Propspanico, Urban League, AARP and the Veterans Job Mission Partnership.

Organizational Capacity and Implementation Challenges (30 points)

RFP for Foster Care Agencies

19. Complete the following chart of services your organization currently provides in contract with DHS and/or other PA counties. You may add additional lines to the chart, as needed.

Service Name	Service Description	Contracting Entity	Contract Amount	Start Date of Contract
Dauphin County	Multiple Services	Merakey PA	\$2,960,268	7/1/2020
Allegheny County	Multiple Services	Merakey PA	\$2,272,244	7/1/2020
Lehigh County	Multiple Services	Merakey PA	\$1,758,315	7/1/2020
Orange County NY	Prevention	Merakey PA	\$574,325	7/1/2020
Beaver County	Multiple Services	Merakey PA	\$558,900	7/1/2020

20. Describe the challenges that your organization has experienced in the past and/or that you anticipate with fulfilling the Foster Care Scope of Services, as described in the RFP, and how you will mitigate those challenges.

As with most foster care agencies, there is never enough foster homes. The need for foster homes not only ends with just needing “beds” but needing a variety of homes to support the different needs of the youth that come into care. As mentioned earlier, we will utilize a staff member to focus solely on recruitment, training, onboarding parents and retaining them.

21. Provide a plan for implementation that clearly identifies your organization’s strengths and challenges to implementing the Scope of Services, including the changes your organization will need to make (in terms of staffing, training, structure, Board of Directors, etc.) to deliver the services described. Attach a timeline for implementation that includes benchmarks and anticipated completion dates, clearly showing what can be in place by July 2021 and what will require more time to implement. The attachment is not included in the page count.

Program Management will utilize Merakey’s Health Ethics Award Winning Readiness Review patented process to quickly build our capacity to place children. This process is managed by our Project Management Department and provides support and accountability in completing all the tasks required for startup and implementation of a new program. The Merakey Project Management Coordinator assembles an identified team that represents Human Resources, Billing, Licensing, QCO (Quality and Compliance Organization), Communications, Administration, Service Division Experts, Finance, Business Operations and Program Operations. The team develops a comprehensive task list with timelines and accountability standards meeting on a regular basis to track progress, barriers and review task completion. Through Merakey’s successful experience of over 20 years in supporting Foster Care programs across the state and local to counties surrounding Allegheny, several resources are available and accessible for startup of a Treatment Foster Care program in the county. These resources include a program director, executive director and currently approved resource homes. These already approved homes would be evaluated to determine their willingness and ability to support the youth referred for this program and support recruitment efforts.

Financial Management and Budget (10 points, not included in page count)

22. Provide a detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining Foster Care, including the suggested Maintenance Rate for

RFP for Foster Care Agencies

TFC homes for the selected model and whether that amount varies based on the age of the child in care. You may provide the line-item budget as an attachment (e.g., Excel file) or in the space below.

Please see attached budget.

23. Provide a budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in the proposed budget.

Please see attached budget.

Merakey
TFC/FCP/IFSS
Allegheny County
Annual Budget

Job Title	Pay Rate	Weekly Hours	Grand Total	TFC Total	FCP Total	IFSS Total
Program Director	34.33	40.00	71,400	35,700	35,700	
Program Director	34.33	20.00	35,700			35,700
Admin Assistant	12.34	36.00	23,098	7,699	7,699	7,699
Program Specialist	25.75	40.00	53,550	53,550		
Program Specialist	25.75	26.80	35,879	35,879		
Program Coordinator	15.90	40.00	33,075	33,075		
Program Coordinator	15.90	40.00	33,075		33,075	
Recruiter	21.00	40.00	43,680	25,995	17,685	
Recruiter	21.00	23.80	25,995			25,995
Family Engagement Coordinator	19.18	40.00	39,900			39,900
Family Therapist	28.27	40.00	58,800			58,800
Education/Case Coordinator	19.95	40.00	41,496			41,496
On-Call Stipends			13,000	4,642	3,158	5,200
TOTAL WAGE			508,647	196,539	97,318	214,790
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS			177,910	68,744	34,039	75,127
TOTAL SALARY			686,557	265,283	131,357	289,917
OPERATING						
STAFF DEVELOPMENT			10,119	2,160	1,124	6,835
PURCHASED PERSONNEL-Audit			1,012	376	256	381
PURCHASED PERSONNEL-Regional Direct Charge			82,298	30,549	20,784	30,965
PURCHASED PROVIDER - Foster Family Stipends			598,205	213,525	197,100	187,580
PURCHASED PROVIDER - FP Peer Support			9,571	3,571	2,429	3,571
COMPUTER LEASES			3,780	1,500	1,020	1,260
OCCUPANCY			82,204	30,669	20,866	30,669
COMMUNICATIONS - iPhones			7,020	2,785	1,895	2,340
AUTO LEASE			9,172	3,422	2,328	3,422
AUTO REPAIRS			1,938	723	492	723
OFFICE SUPPLIES			878	327	223	327
STAFF TRAVEL			118,178	42,880	27,683	47,615
LIABILITY INSURANCE			12,073	4,665	2,310	5,098
AUTO INSURANCE			5,033	1,878	1,277	1,878
MARKETING			7,976	2,976	2,024	2,976
TOTAL OPERATING			949,456	342,004	281,812	325,639
TOTAL OPERATING & SALARY			1,636,013	607,287	413,169	615,557
ADMINISTRATIVE ALLOCATION			212,685	78,949	53,712	80,024
TOTAL EXPENSES			1,848,698	686,237	466,881	695,581
REVENUE						
Days			10,694.50	3,285.00	4,927.50	2,482.00
Rates				\$208.90	\$94.75	\$280.25
TOTAL REVENUE			1,848,698	686,237	466,881	695,581
INCOME / (LOSS)			(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)

**Merakey
TFC/FCP/IFSS
Allegheny County
Budget Narrative**

Salaries	Needed indirect staffing positions to ensure program success and direct staffing positions needed to meet service description requirements all competitively compensated to ensure quality staff are recruited and retained.
Benefits	FICA - Based on Federal standard rate. SUI/Workers Comp/Pension - Projected costs for staffing compliment based on current run rates. Health & Welfare - Includes medical/vision/dental/std/ltd/life insurance based on current rates.
Staff Development	Staff training costs including conferences, work shops and credentialing.
Purchased Personnel-Audit	Estimated costs from our independent auditors.
Purchased Personnel-Regional Direct Charge	Regional costs which are directly charged to all programs based on the proportionate share of net operating expenses.
Purchased Provider - Foster Family Stipends	Daily stipend amounts for foster families while children are in placement.
Purchased Provider - Foster Family Peer Support	Stipends for foster families to assist and support new foster families.
Computer Leases	Includes 9 laptops for staff.
Occupancy Cost	Cost for office space at the Merakey Woodland site.
Communications	Includes 9 iPhones with HotSpots for staff.
Auto Lease	Leases for company vehicles for staff to use for business purposes.
Auto Repairs and Maintenance	Projected costs to maintain vehicles.
Office Supplies	Estimated costs for day to day items for office.
Travel	Travel cost for staff for using their personal vehicles at a reimbursement rate of \$0.45 per mile.
Liability Insurance	Estimated costs from insurance carrier.
Auto Insurance	Insurance for company leased vehicles.
Marketing	Estimated costs to market program services and for hiring of foster families.
Administrative Allocation	Based on 13% of net operating costs.
Revenue	Fee-for-service revenue based on projected units (days) times reimbursement rate.



2020-2021

Merakey Pennsylvania
Board of Directors

Joseph S. Martz
Merakey USA
CEO

President



Leah Pason
Chief Strategy Officer
Merakey USA

Vice President



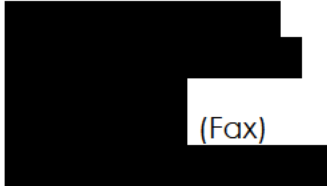
Derrick Yacovelli
Chief Financial Officer
Merakey USA

Treasurer/Secretary



Terrence McNelis
Executive Vice President, IDD Services
Merakey USA

Director



Robert N.C. Nix III, Esquire
Merakey USA Board of Directors
Chairman

Director





Tinnesia Snyder

Senior Vice President of Adult Behavioral Health Services



2020-2021

Director

Rebecca Mann

Senior Vice President of Children & Family Services



Director

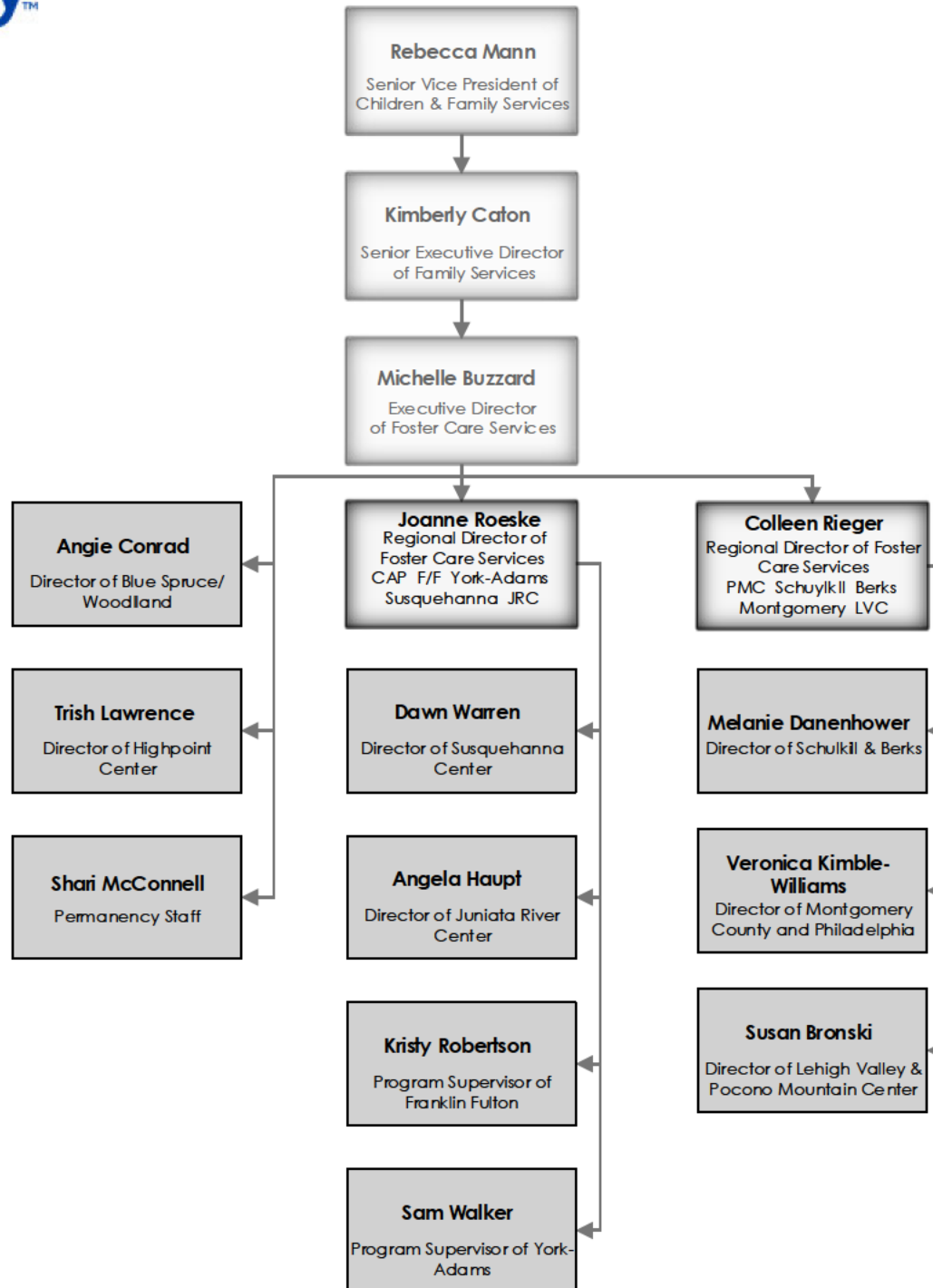
Karen Varney

Executive Assistant to the CEO
Merakey USA



Assistant Secretary

Foster Care Services



Position	Qualifications	Responsibilities
Program Director – Angie Conrad	Master’s Degree, License preferred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Review referrals ◦Intake ◦Clinical supervision of the program ◦Billing/Revenue ◦Maintain contact with contract monitor ◦Supervise on call ◦Attend necessary training ◦Maintain compliance with regulations and contracts
Program Supervisor – Erin Conrad	Master’s Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦MPER System updates ◦Share Point System Updates ◦Review referrals ◦Foster parent approval and re-approval ◦Tracking of staff and foster parent training ◦Intake ◦Supervision of Bachelor’s level staff ◦Attend necessary training ◦Track youth appointment ◦Maintain compliance with regulations and contracts
Administrative Assistant – Kimberly Rhome	High School Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Filing in youth and parent charts ◦Data entry in KIDS ◦Foster parent payroll ◦Clerical work
Program Specialist – Christian Zupke	Master’s Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Individual therapy ◦Family therapy ◦Treatment plan creation and update ◦Monthly treatment reviews ◦Clinical support to foster parents ◦Court attendance as requested ◦Treatment team meetings ◦Clinical intake ◦On call for the program ◦Attend necessary training
Program Specialist -- Ryan Schilinski	Master’s Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Individual therapy ◦Family therapy ◦Treatment plan creation and update ◦Monthly treatment reviews ◦Clinical support to foster parents ◦Court attendance as requested ◦Treatment team meetings ◦Clinical intake ◦On call for the program ◦Attend necessary training
Program Coordinator – Justina Matthews; Devin Conrad	Bachelor’s Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Case coordination ◦IRSP (ISP) completion ◦Quarterly reports to CYF ◦Court attendance ◦Treatment team meetings ◦On call for the program ◦Attend necessary training ◦School meetings
Resource Coach	Bachelor’s Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Research local community events, schedule attendance and participate as needed. ◦ Manage Program’s community recruitment calendar of events. ◦ Recruit new resource families for the TFC/FCP Programs via attending recruitment events, engaging current resource families and staff in recruitment efforts.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Improve the community's awareness of Merakey's TFC/FCP Program.o Track and promptly complete all on-boarding requirements for newly interested Resource Parents.o Verbal and written communication with Resource Parents to denote expectations and clear steps for completion of said requirements related to the approval process.o Uphold all documentation requirements to ensure policy and regulations for approving Resource Parents is met with accuracyo Problem solve any barriers to the approval process with Supervisor as neededo Maintain Train the Trainer status for trainings as identified to assist with on-boarding of Resource Parentso Ongoing communication with Program Leadership to indicate anticipated date of approval for all Resource Parents in the on-boarding process.o Upon completion of the approval process, forward all supportive documentation to Program Leadership for ongoing management of requirements and due dates.o Supervise workload of the Foster Care's Administrative Coordinator.
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Merakey Pennsylvania Allegheny County Foster Care Implementation Schedule

Target Date	Description
Day 0	Continue providing current level of service to Allegheny County youth.
	Post for new positions, some functions of which (such as increased clinical support/visits and administrative oversight) could be available at day 0 utilizing temporary, already-existing staff.
	Submit any IV-E adjustments to already-approved packet necessary (based on specific of contract award).
	Merakey already holds the licenses necessary for provision of proposed services
Day 30	Offer made for new positions
Day 60	New staff are in place and all program functions are available