



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFQ Response Form

RFQ for Student Assistance Programs

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Name: **Allegheny Children’s Initiative**

Authorized Representative Name & Title: **Lisa Peterson-Lizun, Executive Director**

Address: **2304 Jane Street Pittsburgh, PA 15203**

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Website: **<https://www.pfq.org/allegheny-childrens-initiative-inc>**

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

Date Incorporated: **1993**

Partners and/or Subcontractors included in this Application: **None**

How did you hear about this RFQ? *Please be specific.* **DHS email**

Does your organization have a telecommunications device to accommodate individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing? Yes No

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Lisa Peterson-Lizun	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Contract Processing Contact	Daniel Christman	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Information Officer	Stephen McDonell	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Financial Officer	Daniel Christman	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
MPER Contact*	Bobbi Reidenbach	[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.

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BOARD INFORMATION

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

Please see attachment

Board Chairperson Name & Title:

Board Chairperson Address:

Board Chairperson Telephone:

Board Chairperson Email:

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.

Tim Messina

Sto Rox School District, Home and School Visitor

[Redacted contact information for Tim Messina]

Jade Fiore

West Jefferson Hills School District, Supervisor of Special Education

[Redacted contact information for Jade Fiore]

Dr. Marybeth Irvin

Mt. Lebanon School District, Assistant Superintendent Elementary

[Redacted contact information for Dr. Marybeth Irvin]

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Date Submitted **1/21/2022**

Amount Requested: **\$212,787**

CERTIFICATION

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Please check the following before submitting your Application, 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 Application, 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 RFQ.

Choose one:

My Application 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 Application and providing contact information.

OR

My Application 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>.

- Current mental health- and drug and alcohol-related licensures and certificates of compliance
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last three years
- W-9

CAPACITY AND PREFERENCE

List your top three preferences for school districts that you would like to serve.

Mount Lebanon School District

West Jefferson Hills School District

Sto Rox School District

List your current SAP capacity, if any (e.g., how many school districts do you currently serve? How many SAP Liaisons do you currently employ?).

Allegheny Children's Initiative currently serves 3 school districts. We currently employ 3 part-time SAP Liaisons.

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List your ideal SAP capacity (i.e., I currently serve 2 school districts, but I hope to serve 5).
We currently serve 3 school districts but hope to serve 5.

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QUALIFICATIONS

Please respond to the following questions. The maximum score an Application can receive is 105 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 15 pages.

Organizational Experience (25 points)

1. Describe your experience identifying children and families in need of mental health supports and connecting them to appropriate services based on your working knowledge of the mental health system in Allegheny County.

Allegheny Children's Initiative (ACI) assesses individual and family needs in a variety of formal and informal ways within its current programs. These assessments help to identify areas of strength and areas of need, including a need for mental health supports. Over the last three years, ACI has demonstrated expertise in assessing for mental health needs within the Student Assistance Program. All SAP Liaisons are certified to administer the SAP Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS). This tool allows our Liaisons to identify needs in multiple areas, including mental health. Armed with information from the SAP CANS, the Columbia Suicide Screening tool, parent and teacher feedback and other school documentation, they work with the family to create recommendations to address these needs. With their knowledge of the mental health system, liaisons provide resources and appropriate options to the student and family. When recommending services and resources, they are always mindful of the unique needs of that student and family, taking into consideration multiple factors including best fit, insurance status, geographic location, family preference, and staffing availability.

To have information that accommodates the various and unique needs of our families, ACI strives to maintain a strong working knowledge of the mental health system, service providers, and treatment options in Allegheny County. ACI maintains an internal electronic Resource Library that houses and categorizes commonly used supports, such as housing, food, education, court/JPO systems, and mental health support. ACI is aware that services and supports are always evolving and so we update the Resource Library continuously, keep referral lists up-to-date, and actively seek to learn about new and expanded programs. Allegheny Children's Initiative has been training staff monthly on various resources within the county. ACI will continue to provide training and education opportunities for all programs, including the Student Assistance Program. ACI has great internal communication and shares resource knowledge through staff meetings and emails. Both direct care staff and supervisors/directors are empowered to share resources with the whole agency. Whether it is through our membership and attendance at larger provider meetings or a happen-stance discovery for an individual family, when new or unique supports are located, they are shared. Our staff having this knowledge allows us to help each family better access the most appropriate mental health services.

Informal assessment techniques are simple but are very valuable when assisting a family. Active listening, reflection, asking open questions to learn more, and speaking to the student and family in a nonjudgmental and respectful way assists the on-going assessment of needs and strengths. ACI SAP Liaisons use motivational interviewing techniques and trauma informed approaches to quickly build a relationship with each family and student.

Another aspect of assessing needs is determining which needs to prioritize. ACI believes that the process of determination should be family driven and guided by the family's vision for their child and their family. In addition, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, an individual's basic needs need to

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be met before psychological or self-realization needs can be addressed. ACI SAP Liaisons are skilled at providing resources to help families meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, utilities, and clothing. ACI has found that when families have a voice in prioritization and family choice is encouraged, they are invested and are more likely to follow through with SAP recommendations.

2. Describe your experience identifying children and families in need of drug and alcohol supports and connecting them to appropriate services based on your working knowledge of the drug and alcohol system in Allegheny County.

ACI also has concrete experience in identifying students and families in need of drug and alcohol supports and connecting them with appropriate services. ACI staff complete a Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Disorder (MISA) screening for students over the age of 14. ACI recognizes that the use of drugs and alcohol often begin prior to the age of 14 and utilizes the screening tools on the SAP CANS to screen for substance use with that population. If substance use is indicated by any student, ACI uses the CRAFFT assessment, which consists of a series of 6 questions developed to screen youth for high-risk alcohol and other drug use disorders simultaneously. The CRAFFT assessment allows our staff to assess whether a Level of Care Assessment is warranted to determine treatment needs.

Once a need has been identified, ACI SAP Liaisons provide information about drug and alcohol assessment services. Before speaking with a parent or school about these recommendations, SAP Liaisons ensure that the student has consented to share this information. When making a recommendation, ACI takes into consideration multiple factors including best fit, insurance status, geographic location, family preference, and staffing availability. If transportation is a barrier, ACI recommends providers that provide in-home or telehealth services.

As with mental health services in Allegheny County, ACI works to keep our staff informed and knowledgeable about drug and alcohol treatment options within the county. As described previously, our “Resource Library” serves to disseminate new information and keep our staff well-versed of what is services are available in Allegheny County.

3. Discuss your experience working in schools or with school-aged children and their families, including school-aged children and families from diverse backgrounds.

Allegheny Children’s Initiative has an extensive amount of experience working with students and families from racial, ethnical, religious, and culturally diverse communities. The three school districts that ACI currently provides Student Assistant Program service to are very different in their makeup. To promote a culturally competent and humble work environment, ACI provides a comprehensive cultural humility training to all new staff during orientation. This in-depth training encourages new staff to ask questions instead of assuming, be open to learn from each family they encounter, and embrace cultural humility. The training allows staff to think about how their own culture, race, and background affects the way they view situations and families and includes information and exercises on implicit bias offered through the Harvard University program, Project Implicit. ACI also regularly provides internal trainings to help staff be more responsive to diverse populations. Recently, staff participated in a training by Ron Idoko (University of Pittsburgh, Diversity and Multi-Cultural Programs Manager) titled *Building Our Racial Competence to Foster Racial Equity*. Starting in January 2022, ACI will be facilitating a series called *Developing Diversity Consciousness to Foster Antiracist Practices, Cultures, and Communities*.

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This series is hosted by the Two5Five group and includes 7, 2-hour facilitator-lead content sessions and 7, 2-hour guided debriefing sessions. Following the 14-weeks, ACI and the Two5Five Group will hold consultation sessions to determine where we as an agency go and includes updating our recruitment practices, ways to retain a diverse workforce, updating our policies and procedures and other actionable items to ensure that ACI is a provider that is equitable and just. Other trainings recently hosted by ACI include the Poverty Simulation training presented by Just Harvest, a training on working with immigrant families from Immigrant Services and Connections, and a training regarding mental health treatment for transgender individuals by the Persad Center.

In addition to on-going trainings and presentations, program supervisors and staff have regular discussions about diversity and culture and how it plays a role in the services liaisons provide. ACI recognizes that it is important to understand how the unique experiences and identities of each student/family member affect their ability to join with and accept services from the staff person. During group and individual supervision, program supervisors model communication skills and confidence needed to have conversations with families that may be uncomfortable. Having open conversations about a person's experiences, culture, race, gender, and other identities provides important information to liaisons that guides their recommendations. These difficult conversations allow staff to understand the individual family culture, as well as inequities based in race and culture that contribute to the family's experience. The supervisors at ACI have created a safe space in which to grow these discussions of culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work every day.

Over the last several years, the number of immigrant families to whom ACI provides services has increased dramatically. Through its longstanding relationship with the Center for Hearing and Deaf Services: Spoken Language Interpreting Services department, ACI is able to provide culturally humble services to families who do not speak English as a first language or have limited English proficiency. From the initial contact with the family, staff work alongside the foreign language interpreter to build trust and rapport, knowing that this additional layer to the communication inherently causes barriers. ACI staff are patient, frequently check for understanding, and make sure the student and his/her family are an active contributor in determining service recommendations. ACI staff demonstrate great humility and eagerness to learn about each student and family, their unique priorities, cultural practices, and norms.

As an organization, ACI has been identified as taking steps to further equity, inclusion, and diversity for both the families we serve and our employees. Recently, ACI developed and facilitated the cultural humility training for the Core Curriculum of the Family Based Mental Health Training Institute at UPMC/WPH. This illustrates ACI's growing reputation in Allegheny County as not only working with diverse families, but also skillfully incorporating the social and cultural changes in real time that impacts the families we serve.

4. Please attach your current mental health- and drug and alcohol-related licensures and certificates of compliance. These attachments are not included in page count.

Service Delivery (50 points)

5. Describe your plan for providing screenings within 30 days of the SAP Team's recommendation for screening. What obstacles do you foresee in completing screenings in a timely manner and how will you overcome them?

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Once a referral has been made to the SAP Core Team and the team determines that the student's needs warrant a screening, the school sends a parent/guardian consent form to the family. Once the signed parent consent is delivered to the liaison, the SAP Liaison contacts the family. When possible, this contact occurs on the next school day and involves a conversation about the SAP process, what a screening entails, when it will take place, and what will occur after the screening is completed. The SAP Liaison also discusses any concerns or questions that the parent may have at that time. The SAP Liaison schedules the screening with the school, based on the student's class schedule and availability. ACI's goal is to have the student screening scheduled within the 2-week period following the parent contact. The SAP Liaison is mindful that the needs of some students referred may be more urgent than others and works with the Core Team to determine if a screening needs to occur more immediately.

There are several foreseeable obstacles that can hinder the timely provision of screenings. It may take an extended amount of time to receive the parent consent form back. If the parent has questions or concerns about the SAP process that may be delaying them signing the consent form, the SAP Liaison can contact the family and further review the SAP process. Once the parent consent form is returned, the SAP Liaison may have difficulty connecting with the parent for the consult. If this happens, the SAP Liaison attempts to communication with the parent in multiple ways, including phone calls, texts, and emails. Another obstacle may be student attendance. Some of the students being referred for screenings have poor school attendance and if a student is not in school on the day a screening is scheduled, it could lengthen the process and interfere with the 30-day timeline. If screenings are scheduled early in the 30-day timeline, this allows for a reschedule if necessary. Also, letting the parent know when the screening is scheduled helps to promote attendance that day. With these and any other obstacles, the SAP Core Team and school staff are a valuable resource of information with regards to engaging students and parents. School staff know their families and communities the best and have knowledge about what techniques and approaches to engagement have been effective in the past.

6. Describe your plan for involving diverse families in initial SAP activities, especially your approach to engaging with parents.

ACI recognizes that families play an integral role within the SAP process. Family involvement is key to the successful resolution of issues that are interfering with student achievement. The first step in being able to support a family is building an authentic healing relationship. Relationships start with engagement, and we embrace, with enthusiasm and understanding, the effort that it takes to connect with a family, initially and throughout service delivery. We have found that each school district and the individual families that make up those districts are unique and the barriers that prevent parents from engaging in the SAP process are different. Some barriers that we have encountered include a lack of trust in the education system, stigma surrounding mental health, the parent's own mental health challenges, high needs that cause the family to be focused on other crises and stresses, and a general confusion about the SAP process and role of a SAP Liaison. It is important for the SAP Liaison to work with the SAP Core Team to identify what the barriers to parent participation may be and address those barriers. For example, in a district where there exists a stigma around mental health and services, the SAP Liaison has worked with the school to create a community education session.

Throughout our experience with many families, ACI staff have refined skills and methods related to engagement that offer improved outcomes. These skills, including Motivational Interviewing, are taught to newly hired staff and then revisited during quarterly trainings, job shadowing, and individual and group

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supervisions. ACI staff approach each relationship nonjudgmentally, respectfully, and through a culturally humble and trauma-informed lens. ACI staff listen and hear the family, with no agenda. We treat all families and students with respect and dignity, working to build rapport and establish trust. Staff strive to ask instead of direct, never telling family what they “should” do. ACI staff work with the family to determine what success looks like for them and identifies the needs they are interested in pursuing. For SAP Liaisons, this meaningful engagement starts at the first parent consult and continues through all parent and student contacts.

ACI staff are consistent but flexible. Staff strive to always follow through with what they tell a family they will do. They are consistent and dependable, being on time for parent consults and screenings. On the other hand, they are flexible with families, understanding that taking a rigid posture against missed calls, school absence, and delayed paperwork can further damage engagement. As much as possible, they work with each family to identify and overcome barriers to allow for more consistent service delivery. ACI staff understand that families are doing the best they can do and approach these behaviors in a nonjudgmental, strength-based, and trauma-informed way.

The caring and genuine staff at ACI embrace the “do whatever it takes” approach that the Student Assistance Program needs. We will continue to use all our experience and proven approaches to engage and support families and students at a critical time in their lives. While each family will always be unique and a variety of methods will need to be employed across the program, ACI is committed to relentlessly pursuing meaningful engagement with parents and students.

7. As stated in the RFP, DHS expects that Qualified Applicants will collaborate with the existing network of human service providers in Allegheny County to find service(s) and assistance that best fit the needs of the student and family even if the Qualified Applicant offers the needed service(s) and assistance themselves. Qualified Applicant’s only priority in making referrals should be the best interest of the student and family. Describe your plan for ensuring that students and families are connected to the kinds of services and supports that best meet their needs.

In order to connect students and families with services and supports that best meet their needs, it is important for ACI to collaborate with other human service providers in Allegheny County. There are several ways in which ACI works to stay connected with other providers. ACI completes linkage agreements with other behavioral health agencies and community resources throughout the county. These agreements are signed to promote coordination of services and continuity of care. ACI participates regularly in local and state groups that promote behavioral health services, including Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health meetings, Allegheny County Community of Practice, Conference of Allegheny Providers (CAP), Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA), and Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability (PAR). Additionally, ACI participates in various mental health resource expos and events in the community.

In addition to these efforts, ACI also works to build and strengthen relationships with the human service providers in the communities of the school districts we are working with. Being knowledgeable about the resources within the community helps Liaisons connect families with additional supports, such as afterschool programs, community centers and groups, churches, and scouting. Continued collaborations such as this will allow ACI to understand and utilize the services that are already provided within the community.

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8. How will you incorporate student and family choice into your referral process? After you make your recommendation for treatment or other services, what is your plan for providing students and families with the information they need to make the best choice about how to proceed (e.g., which provider to use, which level of treatment to accept).

Student and family choice will be incorporated into the referral process from the initial contact with the family. SAP Liaisons will gather information about the family location, other providers and services that the family is currently working with, and other activities or involvements that may affect family and student availability. After student needs are identified during the screening process and drug and alcohol and/or mental health assessment(s) or services are recommended, the SAP Liaison contacts the parent to discuss the recommendations. During this open and nonjudgmental conversation, the SAP Liaison shares the recommendations and explores potential barriers. Transportation, family preference in provider or location, family availability, and provider staffing availability are all taken into consideration when giving the parent recommendations and a corresponding list of providers. Sometimes, SAP Liaisons are tasked with being creative in their recommendations to accommodate family choice while still supporting the student's mental health and/or drug and alcohol concerns.

ACI currently provides several mental health programs, but understands that based on family's needs and preferences, ACI may not be the most appropriate choice in provider. The SAP Liaisons are well educated on providers for the most used mental health services, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, Intensive Behavioral Health Services, Drug and Alcohol treatment, Service Coordination, Outpatient (including school-based outpatient), and Family Based Mental Health Services. The SAP Liaisons are familiar with the locations and specialties of the different providers. The SAP Liaisons also help to inform and educate students and families about the various treatment options available, especially when staffing availability for certain services is limited. The SAP Liaison provides educational materials on treatment levels to families and school staff. ACI will continue to promote student and family choice by helping each parent and student understand their service options, both in level and provider, and make a treatment decision that is best for their family.

9. Describe your plan for supporting families after a referral has been made. How will you facilitate their connection to and support them while they receive treatment or other services.

Making the initial recommendation for a service is part of a larger process. For the service to be effective in addressing the targeted need, the student and family must actively engage in the service. ACI works to support each family and their unique needs moving from the initial recommendation to active engagement in services. Following the SAP screening, the SAP Liaison helps the family choose a service and provider that is appropriate to address the student needs. As discussed previously, the SAP Liaison promotes family choice to help develop the recommendation. The SAP Liaison provides the family with educational materials about the service line being recommended, provider contact information, and referral forms when possible. In addition to discussing the recommendations, copies of the recommendation materials are mailed to the family. Two weeks after the recommendations are discussed with the family, a follow up phone call is made to check in. If necessary, barriers to following up with the services are explored. The SAP Liaison can review the recommendations again if the family is confused or has questions. They can provide additional provider names and contacts if needed. Generally, this follow-up connection helps each family address any roadblocks in setting up the recommended service.

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Depending on the level of independence and familiarity with the services, certain families may need more support during this time. The SAP Liaison will continue to provide support to the parent and continue to follow up until services are in place or until the parent expresses that they are comfortable moving forward independently. Supporting each student and family to overcome their own unique barriers and become connected to appropriate services is vital for the SAP process to be successful.

10. Scenario 1:

Mia is a 9-year-old female Latina student attending elementary school in a suburban school district in Allegheny County. Mia was referred to the SAP program by the school social worker for poor school attendance, homelessness, rapidly declining grades and withdrawn behavior in the classroom setting. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mia had never been referred to SAP.

School staff have had several meetings with Mia's mom regarding her grades, behaviors and attendance. At the most recent Student Attendance Improvement Plan meeting, the family disclosed that they were homeless and living with a family friend in a neighboring school district.

Mia displays poor social skills and anxiety in the classroom. She has trouble focusing and recently disclosed to the school counselor that she "doesn't know why she was born." In addition, during a warm-up activity in English Language Arts, Mia described feeling extremely sad, scared for her family and not being able to understand the activity.

Please describe in detail, referencing all four phases of the SAP process, how you would proceed with this referral from the SAP team. Please include possible referral recommendations based on concerns described.

Referral: Since any individual concerned about a student can make a SAP referral, the SAP Liaison will provide education to the school staff involved with Mia to encourage them to make a referral to SAP if they haven't already. Following the referral, a brief discussion of Mia's needs and interventions tried will take place during the Core team meeting. If SAP involvement is deemed appropriate, the parent consent form (for the SAP process and for screening) will be sent to the family by a member of the Core Team. If the family has any questions or needs the SAP process explained in more detail, the SAP Liaison can join a conversation with Mia's parent and the school staff. Since the school staff have had contact with Mia's mother previously, that relationship would be beneficial in initial communication with the parent.

Team Planning: After the parent consent form is signed and returned, the assigned SAP case manager will send out teacher feedback forms and gather Mia's grades, attendance, nurse's reports, discipline reports, and any other school information relevant to the screening. The Core Team will discuss the referral and provide any information they have regarding the student. The SAP Liaison will call Mia's mother to discuss the SAP process, gather more information from the parent about Mia's current concerns and the family's needs, and answer any questions the mother may have. The Liaison will also ask for input on when a good day to do the screening would be. Knowing that the family is currently homeless, the parent may have an idea of when Mia will likely be in school over the next couple of weeks. During this conversation, the SAP Liaison will also provide some initial information on housing and food resources if the parent is receptive. If there are immediate basic needs that the Liaison is made aware of,

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resources can be provided during this initial consultation as well. Next, the SAP Liaison will conduct the screening. This process will include meeting with Mia and administering the SAP Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS), Columbia Suicide Screening, and CRAFFT Assessment if drug and alcohol concerns arise during the screening.

Intervention and Recommendation: Following the screening, the SAP Liaison will pull the information from the parent consultation, teacher feedback forms, SAP Core Team discussions, screening, and other school documentation together to form initial recommendations. The SAP Liaison will contact Mia's mother to share that the screening took place, report on the mood and participation of Mia during the screening and start the discussion about recommendations. The SAP Liaison will talk to Mia's mother about potential barriers to pursuing services for Mia and encourage family choice. The SAP Liaison will provide resources on housing (Allegheny Links, shelter information DHS housing resources) and address any food insecurities (local food pantry, Light of Life). Based on the screening results and family choice, the SAP Liaison may recommend school-based outpatient therapy. This would allow Mia to receive mental health services and support without needing the family to provide an in-home location or transportation. Depending on the results of the suicide screening, the SAP Liaison may provide information on crisis resources such as Re:Solve and CACTIS. After this conversation about recommendations, the SAP Liaison will mail the written recommendations and resources to Mia's family at an address of their choice, as well as educational materials on the recommendations. The SAP liaison can also email information to Mia's family if receiving mail is a barrier. During this phase, the SAP Liaison will also share recommendation information with the SAP Core Team, who may know of additional resources to offer the family.

Support and Follow-up: After two weeks, the SAP Liaison will follow up with Mia's mother to see how connecting to the recommended services is going. At this time the SAP Liaison may need to reiterate recommendations, re-send information, or answer lingering questions. It is also possible that the Liaison can take this time to congratulate Mia's mom on the connections she has made and provide additional resources. Mia and her family may benefit from multiple services and resources, but it is important not to overwhelm any family with too many paths to follow at once. In the future, Mia may benefit from a truancy program, such as Focus on Attendance or YAP, a Blended Service Coordinator, more intensive mental health services, or an education evaluation. The SAP Liaison will continue to monitor Mia's progress through SAP Core Team meetings and Core Team Case Manager. The Liaison will provide additional outreach and support to Mia and her family as necessary.

11. Scenario 2:

Michael is a 15-year-old student attending Brown High School. Michael's preferred pronouns are he, his and him. Michael was born female and his parents have not been accepting of his transition. They continue to use his given name, Michelle, and female pronouns, and routinely state that Michael is simply "going through a phase." Michael was referred to SAP by his school counselor due to missing several days of school and being caught on school grounds with a vape, resulting in a suspension.

Michael reports he has only used the vape once experimentally, did not like the experience and would not do it again. Michael's grades have suffered this year and his teachers report his behavior has been more withdrawn than in the past. His school counselor reports that Michael lost a few friends who were not accepting of his transition and has struggled to make new friendships. Michael has mentioned spending time with older individuals outside of

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school who he reports are more accepting. He becomes closed off when talking about these older friends or where he met them. Michael's parents have been in communication with the school regarding his declining grades and recent suspension. The school was able to obtain signed SAP permission from parents following the suspension.

Please describe in detail, referencing all four phases of the SAP process, how you would proceed with this referral from the SAP team. Please include possible referral recommendations based on concerns described.

Referral: The SAP Liaison will take time to provide thanks and positive feedback to the school counselor for making a referral to the SAP team and supporting Michael in the process. Since the parent consent is signed, the SAP process will continue. If Michael's parent had been hesitant to sign the consent, the SAP Liaison would work with the school staff to contact the family and review the SAP process. The SAP Liaison would work to hear the parents, their concerns about Michael, and focus on the SAP process helping to support those concerns.

Team Planning: Since the parent consent form is signed and returned, the assigned Core team case manager will send out teacher feedback forms and gather Michael's grades, attendance, nurse's reports, discipline reports, and any other school information relevant to the screening. The Core Team will discuss the referral and provide any information they have regarding the student. The SAP Liaison will call Michael's parents to discuss the SAP process, gather more information from the parents about their concerns about their child, and answer any questions they may have. The Liaison will also ask for input on when a good day to do the screening would be. In an effort to meet the parents where they are in the process of accepting their child's transition, the SAP Liaison will be overt about Michael's preferred name and pronouns and ask the parent's how they would like to refer to their child during the conversation. The SAP Liaison will allow them to refer to their child in way they choose, without any judgement. The Liaison will use the language "your child" to avoid misgendering Michael, while also building trust from the parents. Next, the SAP Liaison will conduct the screening. This process will include meeting with Michael and administering the SAP Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS), Columbia Suicide Screening, and CRAFFT Assessment. Michael will need to sign a release of information for the SAP Liaison to share screening information and drug and alcohol information with his parents and the school. The SAP Liaison will take time to explain the release of information to Michael and ensure his consent is informed. If he chooses not to sign, his decision will be respected.

Intervention and Recommendation: Following the screening, the SAP Liaison will pull the information from the parent consultation, teacher feedback forms, SAP Core Team discussions, screening, and other school documentation together to form initial recommendations. The SAP Liaison will contact Michael's parents to share that the screening took place, report on the mood and participation of Michael during the screening and start the discussion about recommendations. Whether or not Michael signed the release of information will determine how much information can be shared with the parents. The SAP Liaison will talk to Michael's parents about potential barriers to pursuing services for Michael and encourage family choice. The SAP Liaison will recommend the family connect with PERSAD to help Michel and the family with better understanding his current transition desires. This will allow him to connect with accepting peers and mentors in a safe environment. PERSAD could also offer support the Michael's parents when they are ready. Along the same lines, the SAP Liaison will offer information on the school's LGBTQIA+ clubs, if they exist. If none exist in that district, a neighboring district may have

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something to offer. Vape cessation information will be provided to Michael, and with permission, his parents. The SAP Liaison will also recommend a mental health assessment occur to assess a need for further mental health supports. Depending on the results of the suicide screening, the SAP Liaison may provide information on crisis resources such as Re:Solve or CACTIS. After this conversation about recommendations, the SAP Liaison will mail the written recommendations and resources to Michael's family, as well as educational materials on the recommendations. During this phase, the SAP Liaison will also share recommendation information with the SAP Core Team, who may know of additional resources to offer the family.

Support and Follow-up: After two weeks, the SAP Liaison will follow up with Michael and his parents to see how connecting to the recommended services is going. At this time the SAP Liaison may need to reiterate recommendations, re-send information, or answer lingering questions. The SAP Liaison will also connect with Michael at school to assess any recommendations or information that were given just to him. The SAP Liaison will continue to monitor Michaels's progress through SAP Core Team meetings and the Core Team Case Manager. The Liaison will provide additional outreach and support to Michael and his family as necessary.

12. Describe why the SAP program is important and your vision for an SAP liaison's relationship and work with school staff, students and families.

The SAP Core Teams work in collaboration with the school community to identify and support students with drug and alcohol and/or mental health issues that pose a barrier to their success as learners. The SAP Teams help centralize and organize support for the student that the school community is concerned about. They facilitate the process from identification to screening to support and services. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff share in the responsibility of identifying students in need of drug and alcohol and/or mental health screening and support. The Core Teams and Liaisons provide education about SAP, mental health, and drug and alcohol use to the school staff. Once a student is identified, the SAP Teams follow the appropriate process to consult, screen, and support the student. The SAP Core Teams work collaboratively with the student, the student's family and teachers in this process.

Within the Core Teams, the SAP Liaisons provides expertise with regards to drug and alcohol and mental health treatment. They supplement and support the Core Team's knowledge about behavioral health and drug and alcohol treatment and services in Allegheny County and the specific district's community. The Liaisons are active and involved within the school community. They have strong relationships with school staff, students, and parents. The Liaisons are always respectful and work to join the existing culture of the school. The Liaisons are a go-to for resources and services. They facilitate consistent communication with school staff and parents and are organized and mindful of timelines. SAP Liaisons are aware of the school's needs and work to address those needs. The SAP Core Teams and Liaisons work together with the school community to ensure that each student achieves, remains in school, and graduates.

13. Describe your plan for providing postvention services. How would you respond if a school district requested a postvention in the summer months?

ACI is committed to providing postvention services to the school districts that we are involved with, including facilitating or assisting with school-based crisis counseling. If a traumatic event occurs that

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adversely affects the behavioral health of students and the school community, such as the death of a student or teacher, a violent event in the community, or a natural disaster, the SAP Liaisons are prepared to provide postvention support as needed. ACI is aware that trauma can occur at any time and is ready to provide these supports during the school year and the summer months. During the school year, including weekends and evenings, the ACI SAP Director and Liaisons work together to provide postvention as needed. During the summer, the school district contacts the ACI SAP Director directly to request support with postvention, ensuring a timely response to the request. The ACI SAP Director and ACI Executive Director support the postvention needs during the summer. During both the school year and summer months, if additional support is needed, ACI recruits clinical staff from internal programs such as Family Based Mental Health and Intensive Behavioral Health Services to support postvention efforts.

The SAP Liaisons are familiar with each school district and community. If certain traumatic events occur frequently, such as community violence, they work with the SAP Core Teams and school districts to have a plan about how to respond. It is likely that districts already have procedures about how to respond to a traumatic event and, if so, the SAP Liaisons familiarize themselves with those procedures. Additionally, the SAP Liaisons are trained in leading preliminary crisis counseling to students and staff. They assess whether individuals need additional support and then connect them with those services. The SAP Liaisons also provide education to school staff, parents, and community members at school sponsored events regarding how to support a person who has experienced a trauma and common behaviors after a trauma.

14. How will you maintain a strong relationship with the school you serve and be dynamic, flexible and responsive to their needs?

ACI maintains a strong, positive, and collaborative relationship with the schools we serve. Communication is key in this endeavor. Through productive and regular communication, the SAP Liaisons build relationships and trust with the SAP Core Teams, school staff and administrators, students, parents, and community providers. Communication is always professional and respectful. ACI understands that we are joining an existing culture and community. Each district and building have their own unique values, customs, and procedures. We work to join the culture and add our expertise by being respectful and seeking opportunities to learn about existing procedures and practices. The SAP Liaisons work diligently to become part of the school community. The SAP Liaisons make themselves visible and available to the school staff, students, and families. At the beginning and end of each school year, the SAP Director and ACI Executive Director meet with school leadership to discuss progress and needs of the district. During the school year, the SAP Director is always open to communication from the school and ready to address any concerns or questions that may arise.

ACI SAP Liaisons are an active and dependable part of the SAP Core Teams. They attend all Core Team meetings and if they are unavailable, ACI will have another Liaison or the SAP Director attend in their absence.

The SAP Liaisons actively work with the district to determine its needs and how to best address those needs. The SAP Liaisons provide structured prevention programs to address issues that affect larger populations within the school. They consult with school staff about individual students. The SAP Liaisons also provide educational consultation to school staff and parents about mental health awareness, drug and alcohol awareness, resources, and SAP. For example, if a school district is observing an increase in alcohol use within their 11th grade students, the SAP Liaisons can provide prevention programs to groups

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of students, provide an educational presentation to parents and the community at a school sponsored event, and engage in the SAP screening process for individually identified students. In this same spirit of consistently assessing and addressing needs, ACI provides each school district with a quarterly SAP newsletter, developed by the SAP Liaisons, and focused on educating staff, students, and community members on SAP, mental health, and drug and alcohol topics and resources.

To ensure that the schools are happy with their relationship with ACI and their SAP Liaison, ACI provides yearly quality measures and ensures the schools know who to contact with any concerns. Addressing any concerns as they occur helps to maintain and strengthen each relationship.

Staffing (10 points)

15. Describe your plan for recruiting and retaining qualified and diverse staff, including your plan for filling staff vacancies in a timely way.

Allegheny Children's Initiative prides itself on being a welcoming and inclusive work environment. Between January 2017 through January 2021, Allegheny Children's Initiative hired a total of sixty-three employees and thirteen of those employees (21%) were non-Caucasian. This number is in line with the percentage of non-Caucasian residents in Allegheny County (20%) as reported in the 2018 US Census, but with the understanding that people of color are over-represented in systems such as mental health and child welfare, ACI will continue in the efforts to hire a quality diverse staff. ACI facilitates an internal Diversity in Hiring workgroup, focused on forwarding the mission of hiring and promoting qualified and diverse staff. The workgroups action steps include utilizing more diverse job boards, engaging with diverse student social clubs at colleges, offering internship and practicum placements to local college students, holding job fairs in diverse neighborhoods, building community partnerships in diverse communities, celebrating lived experience within current staff, and identifying training programs to help build the skills necessary to step into positions of more responsibility. Starting in January 2022, ACI will be facilitating a series called *Developing Diversity Consciousness to Foster Antiracist Practices, Cultures, and Communities*. This series is hosted by the Two5Five group and includes 7, 2-hour facilitator-lead content sessions and 7, 2-hour guided debriefing sessions. All ACI staff will be participating in this opportunity.

All open positions at ACI are posted internally. This gives the opportunity for any current employee who meets the qualifications to apply. Concurrent with the internal postings and interviews, ACI advertises externally. These external recruitment efforts include newspaper ads, university postings, Craigslist, Indeed, Linked-In, and Nonprofit Talent. The Human Resources Department coordinates the recruitment efforts. ACI provides a sign-on bonus for both full-time and part-time staff, paid over their first year of employment.

ACI employs numerous formal and informal retention strategies. We understand that the work our staff does is difficult. Vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout are common in the field of social services, especially when working with families and individuals with significant needs. ACI conducts an annual Employee Satisfaction Survey for all employees. The most recently conducted survey found that 94% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their current job. ACI also collects information to guide retention through an annual Stay Interview Questionnaire. The questionnaire asks employees why they stay at ACI and what ideas they have for making the agency better. The information collected through the satisfaction surveys and stay interview questionnaires is used to help improve the

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culture and work environment at ACI. Allowing opportunities for staff to voice their opinions and ideas is an important part of the open and inclusive culture at ACI and helps to retain staff.

ACI supports an internal Employee Activities and Rewards Committee. The EARC plans and executes monthly events, activities, and gestures of appreciation for our staff, including opportunities to gather for professional fellowship and team building, catered luncheons, and ACI-branded clothing, mugs, and bags. During the pandemic, the EARC found creative ways to celebrate staff remotely by hosting virtual game nights, virtual yoga sessions, virtual paint nights, mailing small gifts, and sending handwritten birthday and work-anniversary cards to each employee. We find that these events and tokens of appreciation help staff feel important and included, connect them to the agency mission, and aid with retention.

ACI has adopted some of the techniques used within The Sanctuary Model by Dr. Sandra Bloom. ACI facilitates a “community meeting” to start each meeting, asking about how each person is feeling, their goals for the day, and who can support them to achieve those goals. This predictable ritual helps staff transition to a group setting. In addition to promoting a safe place and open communication, taking the temperature of the group is one way for supervisors and directors to identify when staff are feeling overwhelmed and need additional support. ACI also trains all staff in self-care and has everyone create a self-care plan. We encourage staff to take care of themselves, both physically and emotionally. Trainings on trauma-informed care and compassion fatigue have been provided to staff within the last year. ACI also offers a generous paid time off package for both full time and part time staff. Additionally, anytime a staff person experiences a work-related traumatic event, they are offered a debriefing from our internal debriefing team. ACI knows that helping staff process these difficult events will decrease vicarious trauma and increase retention.

ACI also finds that promoting professional growth and improvement is a powerful retention strategy. ACI hosts a quarterly All-Agency meeting where staff participate in professional development trainings in a variety of areas, such as trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, and motivational interviewing.

16. Describe your expectations for SAP staff.

ACI expects that SAP Liaisons conduct themselves in a way that is highly ethical, professional, culturally humble, and trauma informed at all times. All employees must comply with ACI personnel policies and procedures. SAP Liaisons are also expected to comply with individual school district policies and procedures. SAP Liaisons are knowledgeable and familiar with drug and alcohol and mental health services and providers in Allegheny County. SAP Liaisons are expected to continue their professional development and attend trainings that are deemed necessary or beneficial to their position.

ACI SAP Liaisons are expected to build relationships with providers already in the school district, in the immediate community, and in the county. They are also expected to build relationships with the members of the SAP Core Team and the school staff, students, and parents in that district. They are visible and available to the school community. SAP Liaisons are expected to attend all SAP Core Team meetings, on time and prepared for the agenda. If they are ever unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to arrange for a substitute (either another ACI SAP Liaison or SAP Director) to fill in and support the team during that meeting. The SAP Liaisons are expected to educate and support the Core Team regarding mental health and drug and alcohol topics, including a yearly opioid epidemic training

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and suicide prevention training. They are expected to support the provision of prevention groups that address various mental health issues, substance use, and pro-social skills for students.

When interacting with families and students, the SAP Liaisons are expected to nonjudgmentally meet the family where they are at. They are expected to provide consistent and respectful communication to both the parents and students. They must understand the laws governing mental health and drug and alcohol information and obtain the appropriate informed consents to share information between parties. ACI will ensure each SAP Liaison is provided the appropriate initial and ongoing training and supervision to meet these expectations. If concerns do arise, the SAP Director will be receptive to feedback and will respond appropriately.

Data Collection and Delivery (10 points)

17. Describe your plan for tracking, entering and reporting data in a timely way.

To facilitate reimbursement by DHS, ACI tracks what services are performed and how long each service is performed through our Electronic Health Record (EHR). Once parent permission is received, the ACI Intake Coordinator creates a consumer record in our EHR. The SAP Liaison logs each service completed into ACI's EHR by writing a documentation note for the service. The Fiscal Services Associate then pulls the service entries from ACI's EHR and enters them into PA WITS weekly. To ensure accurate reporting in the EHR, liaisons recently completed a period of utilizing a paper billing sheet for comparison. The Fiscal Services Associate and SAP Director work together to complete data reporting in the Performance Based Prevention System (PBPS) and Joint Quarterly State Reports (JQSR).

Additionally, the SAP Liaisons collect evidence of the services performed. This includes sign-in sheets for core team meetings, and group prevention programs. Copies of the individual screenings are maintained. Log sheets for individual meetings, consultations, and postvention services are maintained. Training logs for educational presentations and groups trainings are kept. Each student that is referred to SAP has a record within the EHR where the SAP Liaison writes a documentation note regarding each billable service.

18. Describe your plan for quality assurance, including which data elements you will look at to monitor quality.

ACI prides itself on providing quality services to the children and families that it works with. Within the Student Assistance Program, ACI currently provides an end-of-year satisfaction survey to Core Team members and other key staff involved in SAP at each district. The survey asks about satisfaction of the various responsibilities of the SAP Liaisons. It also seeks suggestions on how to improve the service in the future. Information from this survey is reviewed by the ACI Executive Director, ACI Director of Quality Assurance, SAP Director and SAP Liaisons. The feedback helps to guide department and individual goal planning for the upcoming school year. Additionally, SAP documentation is now completed in our Electronic Health Record. This allows ACI to track data regarding timeline from parental consent to screening, and timelines between recommended services and admission. In addition, it provides data to schools regarding the percentage of students referred to SAP, student demographics, and other data points to support district's efforts are reaching students who would benefit from the SAP process.

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SAP Liaisons are regularly supervised by the ACI SAP Director. Supervisions include both administrative and referral guidance and support. Both group and individual supervision is provided. Through direct supervision and reading documentation notes, the SAP Director assures the most appropriate resources and services are being recommended, timelines are being followed, and communication with the student, parent, and school staff is occurring. Supervisions also serve to provide ongoing professional development for the SAP Liaison. Additionally, if any outside trainings are deemed necessary or valuable, the SAP Liaison attends them.

Budget (10 points possible) is not included in page count. You may submit the budget as an attachment [e.g., Excel file] or in the space below.

19. Provide a detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining your organization's SAP at the ideal capacity you listed in the beginning of the Application.

Attached.

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

Attached.