

Request for Information



State of Alaska
Department of Family and Community Services
Division of Office of Children's Services

Date Issued: January 11, 2023

ANCHORAGE FAMILY CONTACT SERVICES SUPERVISION

Introduction:

The Office of Children's Services is seeking responses from organizations for interest to coordinate and facilitate supervised family contact services in Anchorage, Alaska. The primary purpose of this service is to promote reunification through providing a safe environment for family interactions to occur between parents and their children who are residing in out of home care. These services may occur in an agency setting or community setting depending on the progress of the parents with the goal of ensuring child safety. Through these coordinated services, the provider will aid in an increase in family parenting and communication skills and promote family reunification through providing families the opportunity to have frequent contact in a safe, structured, and supervised setting.

Background Information:

The Office of Children's Services may procure services to support family reunification through the facilitation of meaningful family contact using the Strengthening Families™ approach. Strengthening Families™ focuses on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors. Protective factors are the conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or the larger society that mitigate risk and promote healthy development and well-being. Changing the balance so that protective factors outweigh risk factors is an effective strategy for preventing child abuse and neglect (Center for the Study of Social Policy). The Five Protective Factors are:

- Parental resilience - The ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family's life. It means finding ways to solve problems, building trusting relationships including relationships with your own child, and knowing when to seek help when necessary.
- Social connections - positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.
- Knowledge of parenting and child development - understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.
- Concrete support in times of need - access to support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.
- Social and emotional competence of children – encourage family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships.

Deliverables are intended to promote and enhance the protective factors in parents. Frequent family contact allows parents to work through their goals and helps providers to gain knowledge in order to provide active guidance during family interactions. Activities offered during family contact to promote family interaction

that are flexible, family oriented, and age appropriate in order to increase parental capacity and maintain the positive connection.

Minimum Qualifications:

The interested responding parties should have:

1. Minimum of three (3) years of experience providing services to children and families in a health or social service setting;
2. Minimum of one (1) year experience providing services to families who are at-risk, utilizing trauma-informed care approach and working towards mitigating safety risks for the family members;
3. Minimum of one (1) year experience working with Alaska Native populations;
4. The ability to pass a background check;
5. Must have completed the online Alaska Mandated Reporter Training or do so within three (3) months of contract start date.

In addition to the experience requirements above, the interested parties must describe and provide the following minimum prior experience in their response;

- Specific experience working with children and families in a health or social service setting;
- Specific experience providing services to families who are at-risk;
- A timeline that defines the interested party's methodology and how it will meet the program goals in the deliverables.
- Capacity in numbers of hours of family contact per week; and
- Management plan and proposed collaboration with the State on this project.

Scope of Work:

The goal of this project is to promote reunification through providing families in Anchorage area the opportunity to have frequent contact in a safe, structured and supervised setting. Protocols have been developed to help OCS decide the appropriate level of supervision during visitation between a parent(s) and child(ren) and guides courts in making determinations about Family Contact in child welfare cases.

The intent and vision is to facilitate for structured family time level of supervision determined by OCS. Levels of family contact are:

1. Low Supervision:

Definition: Family contact occurs in the presence of a designated third party who evaluates and assesses the child/youth-family interaction and/or teaches and helps parents practice parenting skills. Family contact supervisor allows parents to structure interaction and activities, stepping in only when parents need assistance.

Family contact supervisor has a clear plan, with structured activities, to observe and enhance parental capabilities, whenever necessary. Family contact encourages parent-driven interaction (parent initiates activity/interaction).

2. Moderate Supervision:

Definition: Presence of a designated family contact supervisor who evaluates and assesses the child/youth-family interaction and/or teaches and helps parents practice parenting skills. Supervisor helps parents structure the interaction and activities according to instructions provided in advance by the Protective Services Specialist, and these instructions are based on case-specific factors or concerns.

Family contact supervisor has a clear plan, with structured activities, to observe and enhance parental capabilities, whenever possible. Family contact allows for appropriate parent-driven interaction.

3. High Supervision:

Definition: The child/youth may not be removed from the presence of a family contact supervisor. The supervisor's responsibilities include protecting the child/youth's emotional and physical safety, and evaluation and assessment of child/youth-family interaction. The supervisor strictly enforces rules for child/youth-parent interaction that have been explained in advance by the Protective Services Specialist. Clinical supervision by a designated community agency representative or appropriately trained OCS staff may be necessary in cases of sexual or physical abuse or violence between siblings.

The offeror must provide information on the how the visitation space is appropriate to provide visitation between children in out-of-home placement and families. The technical proposal must provide detailed information concerning routine security measures.

The space must promote privacy, and quality interaction between parent/child. The successful offeror must provide a schedule of operations that includes afternoon, and available alternate schedules to include evening or weekend availability for Family Contact services. The setting must reflect the diverse cultural aspects of the community and be open and flexible to meet the scheduling needs of the children and families served.

Deliverables:

The interest parties should describe their plans to execute the following deliverables:

1. Schedule Family Contact Sessions within 10 business days after receiving the family contact referral from OCS;
2. Maintain active contact with parents to help ensure they arrive at the family contact on time;
3. Greet children, foster parents and parents at the beginning of each family contact session;
4. Provide supervision and intervention if necessary to ensure that all participants remain safe;
5. Provide coaching and support during the family contact session in order to guide parents in providing healthy guidance, structure and discipline to their children;
6. Close the family contact session by preparing the participants for the visit to end. Ensure the child gets to the adult who is responsible for them;
7. Affirm the next family contact session time with the parent;
8. Document the family contact session on the form provided by OCS. Provide the form to the OCS point of contact no less than 2 business days from the date of the family contact session;
9. Communicate by email to the assigned OCS case worker within 24 hours if there are safety concerns, or if the parent or child do not show up to the scheduled visit.

Response Information:

To participate with a response to the RFI, firms must indicate their interest by submitting an electronic response

(.pdf format is preferable) with the following information:

- Firm Name;

- Individual authorized to sign contracts;
- Mailing and Physical addresses;
- Phone & Fax numbers;
- Email address;
- Products and services offered and why these will work for the State;
- A statement of how the firm meets or exceeds the needs of the Department. The firm's statement should address how they meet the minimum qualifications and can provide the services outlined in the scope of work and deliverables above.

Procurement Officer contact information:

Interested parties must submit a written response by January 23, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. AKST. Responses may be sent by U.S. mail or E-mail to the addresses listed below.

All questions must be directed to the person listed below writing via email.

Department of Family and Community Services

Attention: R. Todd Webster

Address: 3601 C Street, Suite 902, Anchorage Alaska 99503

Phone: 907-268-4847

Email: Todd.T.Webster@alaska.gov