

State of Delaware

HSS-14-049

Office of Early Learning and Division of Social Services

Request for Information (RFI): New Ideas for Stabilizing Child Care Services in Purchase of Care

Purpose

The purpose of this RFI is to provide the Office of Early Learning (OEL) and the Division of Social Services (DSS) with options regarding purchasing child care services via a blend of buying slots and providing vouchers. DSS invites child care service providers to participate in a planning process relative to this RFI. OEL and DSS will use information obtained during the planning process to further understand industry norms and capabilities. The agencies intend to develop an RFP to pilot new ideas in high-need areas.

Background

Currently there are approximately 28,000 children eligible for the Purchase of Care Program (POC or child care) offered by DSS. Of these, we pay for POC for an average of 14,000 children per month. These children are served in child care centers, licensed in-home day care centers or by in-home/relative care givers. We have approximately 900 providers. POC is currently a voucher program in which the dollars follow the child to whatever program is selected by the parent.

OEL and DSS are currently exploring the possibility of pilots with high-quality (4 and 5-Star) child care providers that serve a significant percentage of children funded by POC. The purpose of this RFI is to secure the assistance of service providers in crafting a Pilot for some POC services that would:

- Encourage more high-quality child care providers to accept POC subsidy
- Strengthen the quality of child care providers located in neighborhoods where high-need children live
- Encourage high-quality child care providers to serve more infants and toddlers
- Make it possible for high-quality child care providers to stay in business because they have a more stable source of funding

Information Requested

OEL and DSS are seeking to further gather information from providers related to the following:

- How can the subsidized child care program most effectively streamline the paperwork, communication, policies and procedures related to eligibility determination so that there are fewer gaps in service among children in a different contract arrangement than our present system of providing a child voucher?
- If the subsidized child care program contracts with providers for slots rather than provides a voucher for child, how will the provider assure that an eligible child fills the slot?
- What is a reasonable expectation for attendance for a child filling contract slot?
- Continuity of care, which is a quality factor, is complicated by the child's eligibility for the program. What is the provider's role in retaining a child in a slot?
- How should the POC co-payment policy be revised to "uncouple" it from the price of care and more accurately reflect the needs and resources of DE families?

Quality Standards

- The Pilot will focus on 4 & 5 Star providers. Given the focus on high-needs children, OEL and DSS are interested in requiring particular standards for providers participating in this pilot. For example, we would like providers who respond to our RFP to conduct child assessment, have a high level of family engagement, and provide an inclusive environment. What other standards do you think are essential to successfully serving high needs children?

Funding

- How should contract "slots" be allocated? By community? Age? Type of care?
- Should there be a minimum number of contracted slots per service provider?
- How should dollars be re-allocated if contracted slots are not full?
- How should a contractual arrangement for slots handle payment when a slot is vacant or there are high numbers of absent days?

Monitoring

- Participating centers and homes will be expected to maintain a 4 or 5-Star level
- What expectations are reasonable regarding financial monitoring?
- The pilot proposes to pay based on slots rather than a child voucher. How to operate under such an arrangement with regard to attendance, absences, and open slots is of special interest to OEL and DSS.

RFI Obligations

The RFI is a request for information only. DSS and OEL will host a meeting on 8/26 to answer questions about this document so that providers can most effectively respond to the information request. There will be no contract awarded as a result of the RFI. Nothing in the materials submitted by child care providers, further referred to as Vendor Information Packages (VIP), as a response to this RFI nor DSS' remarks or responses to the VIP or any individual vendor, will be considered binding for a future contract.

Contact Person and Submission

DSS is the point of contact with regard to all questions relating to this RFI. All communications concerning this RFI must be addressed to the contact person:

Questions about this RFI should be directed to:

Yvonne Miles
Social Service Senior Administrator
1901 N. Dupont Hwy, Lewis Bldg.,
New Castle, DE. 19720

Submissions of responses are to be in either hardcopy delivered to the address below or electronic PDF to

Kieran.mohammed@state.de.us no later than 11am on 9/19/14

Hardcopy responses should be mailed to :

Kieran Mohammed, Purchasing Services Administrator
Herman Holloway Campus
Main Administrative Building , Room 257
1901 N. DuPont Hwy
New Castle DE 19720.

With this RFI, we are interested in the provider's response to the 4 areas listed above. A concise response to the questions noted above will assist DSS in developing a process and rules for a new form of contract arrangement. Providers will be selected, based on an RFP, to participate in the pilot. Responses should be submitted electronically.

To streamline the review process, the VIP needs to:

- Have a cover letter on the letterhead of the company submitting the VIP
- Identify a contact person which includes a phone number and email address
- Indicate willingness to participate in discussion groups to further articulate the possibilities of a pilot.

Tentative Schedule

RFI Issued: 8/13/2014

RFI Information Teleconference: 8/26/2014 @ 10am – 11 am

Bridge line Access : 302-255-2900

Access code: 493037

Vendor Information Packages Received by: 9/19/2014 11:00am