

# **PRESERVATION AND REUNIFICATION PROGRAMS**

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**



**May 9, 2024**

**State of Connecticut**

**Department of Children and Families**

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**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAILIES  
505 Hudson Street  
Hartford, CT 06106**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**

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**PROGRAM TITLE**

**Preservation and Reunification Programs Re-Design**

**SCHEDULE**

RFI Published	May 9, 2024
RFI Questions Due	May 16, 2024
RFI Questions and Answers Posted	May 21, 2024
RFI Response Deadline	June 27, 2024
All Feedback Responses Posted to DAS Website	July 25, 2024

Additional details about the Schedule and RFI process can be found in the RFI Technical Assistance Discussion section.

**OVERVIEW**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF or the Department) is seeking information, ideas and feedback from families, service providers and other interested parties in the design, part or in whole, and potential implementation of a single preservation and reunification program. The goal of this RFI is to broaden the Department's view and process on the delivery of preservation and reunification services to improve upon the following:

- Provision of an evidence-based preservation/reunification service;
- Provision of equitable, seamless, and timely services to all families referred;
- Delivery of integrated services whenever possible;
- Intensification of services at point of removal to reduce out of home stays instead of terminating engagement in open preservation services (if open);
- Meeting of federal permanency timelines, and
- Improvement of client outcomes.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of this RFI is to engage in a structured, systematic process for receiving information from stakeholders and the community regarding potential program improvements to the Preservation and Reunification services. As indicated in the SCHEDULE section, the Department encourages participation and feedback through written prepared responses to this RFI.

**DISCLAIMER**

The Department is requesting responses to this RFI for information purposes only and will not be obligated in any way to use any of the information received. Individuals and or agencies responding to this RFI will not be compensated in any way. Responding to this RFI will not enhance an individual or agency's chances of receiving

future contracts from the Department. Similarly, not responding to this RFI will not be a detriment to any individual or agency when responding to future competitive procurement opportunities. All RFI responses submitted will become the property of the State of Connecticut.

Due regard will be given for the protection of proprietary information specifically identified in any response received. However, individuals and or agencies should be aware that all materials associated with this RFI are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Preservation Services**

The Department is charged with serving and safeguarding the most vulnerable children and families in the State and ensuring that service delivery is directed towards their safety, protection, and well-being. The Department's preservation program is an intensive in-home, crisis intervention and parental education program that targets families who are involved with the Department and whose children, ages 0 to 17, are at risk of being removed from their care.

The theoretical framework for service delivery to DCF involved families is grounded in the Strengthening Families Practice Model, which also shares the principles of Connecticut's Child and Family Teaming Model. The following principles represent the manner in which the Department and its partners work with families:

- a. Approaches are grounded in child safety at the forefront,
- b. Children do best when living safely at home with their family of origin, and
- c. Services should be individualized and based on a full assessment of strengths and needs of children and their families.

The philosophy that guides this preservation service is that children should remain with their families whenever possible, that families are constantly engaged in a process of development and growth, and that all families have strengths to draw upon. The goal of the preservation program is to ensure child safety, stabilize families, prevent out of home placement, improve family functioning, and link families with appropriate community resources.

Current preservation outcomes include:

- a. The number and percentage of referred families by race/ethnicity served;
- b. The percentage of families by race/ethnicity served who successfully completed the program as defined by the family meeting the majority of their goals in their Service Plan;
- c. The percentage of children by race/ethnicity whose families completed the program who remain safely in their home six months following closure as defined by no new substantiations or no new entries into DCF care;
- d. The percentage of families by race/ethnicity who completed the program who are connected to resources and services in the community to address their identified needs;
- e. The percentage of families by race/ethnicity who completed the program and report being satisfied with the services they received;
- f. The number and percentage of families by race/ethnicity who experienced an increase in supports upon conclusion of the program; and
- g. The number and percentage of families that have successfully discharged from the program as defined by having Met Treatment Goals and Meeting the Majority of the Program Goals.

## Reunification Services

Family reunification and permanency planning for children were first emphasized legislatively in the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. In 1993, Congress passed the Family Preservation and Family Support Services Program, providing states with additional resources for services to support and strengthen families and enhance reunification efforts. In 1997, the Adoption and Safe Families Act was enacted reauthorizing funding for family preservation and family support services but adding time-limited reunification and adoption services as viable permanency options for children. It emphasized that safety and well-being of children needs to be of paramount importance when making decisions about reunifying children with their families. Under this legislation, states are required to reunify children safely with their parents within twelve months of removal without increasing rates of children re-entering care or experiencing repeat maltreatment.

In order to provide timely and safely reunification, the Department provides three service types that could be used in combination with one another or individually based on the family's needs. These service types are available to families with children from birth to age 17 who are removed from their home due to protective service safety concerns. These children may be victims of neglect and/or physical or sexual abuse. They may have also been exposed to substance use (SU), intimate partner violence (IPV), and mental health (MH) issues and/or other disabling conditions of the parent. Some children may have a non-custodial parent that is incarcerated, uninvolved, or active with the care/visitation of their children. The current three components include: reunification assessment, visitation, and reunification intervention.

The reunification assessment includes:

- The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for General Services (NCFAS - G+R) to inform service delivery;
- An assessment of family functioning, exploration of risk and safety concerns, identification of family strengths, needs, and barriers to reunification;
- Weekly visits with parents and their children, implementing the Visit Coaching Model; and
- A report providing feedback and recommendations regarding the family's readiness for reunification.

Visitation includes:

- Minimally once a week visits that are culturally and linguistically sensitive, individualized, and occurs in the least restrictive, most homelike setting possible, implementing the Visit Coaching Model, which provides an intervention between the children and their parent(s) to increase positive interactions and to foster attachment through increased parenting skills.

The reunification service includes:

- The use of the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for General Services (NCFAS - G+R) to inform service delivery;
- The use of wraparound techniques to engage the family and build their network of supports;
- Once a week visits that are culturally and linguistically sensitive, individualized, and occurs in the least restrictive, most homelike setting possible, implementing the Visit Coaching Model, which provides an intervention between the children and their parent(s) to increase positive interactions and to foster attachment through increased parenting skills; and

Current reunification outcomes include:

- a. The number and percentage of families who were referred to the different reunification interventions;
- b. The number and percentage of families who received each of the different reunification interventions;

- c. The number and percentage of families who received the reunification assessment and were referred immediately to reunification services;
- d. The number and percentage of families who participated in Family Team Meetings in which their supports were present;
- e. The percentage of families connected to resources and services in the community to address their identified needs;
- f. The percentage of families who completed the program and report being satisfied with the services they received;
- g. The number of children whose families completed reunification services who remain safely with their family six months following closure as defined by no new substantiations or no new entries into DCF care;
- h. The number and percentage of families discharged who met permanency goals;
- i. The number and percentage of families who experienced an increase in supports upon conclusion of the program;
- j. The number and percentage of children who experienced reunification after any of the interventions; and
- k. The percentage of families who completed the reunification service and demonstrated improvement in scores in their pre-post testing on the NCFAS-G+R.

### Components Of Preservation - Reunification Program Relevant To This RFI

The following components have been identified in current preservation and reunification services:

Component	Preservation	Reunification
in home service	X	X
child safety planning	X	X
improve parental capacities (responding to child's cues, regulate emotion while under stress, problem solve, manage child's behavior, etc.)	X	X
advocacy school, medical, legal, child welfare systems	X	
coordination and linkages to community providers	X	X
case management	X	X
24/7 crisis intervention	X	X
initial joint home visits between DCF and provider staff	X	
flexible schedule including early morning/evenings and weekends	X	X
multi-lingual/multi-cultural capabilities within their staff	X	
access to clinical staff		X
identifies/builds/uses natural supports	X	X
intervention for all household members	X	
assessment of family functioning (inclusive of risk/safety, barriers to preservation/reunification)		X
standardized visitation approach (coaching, modeling)		X
involve foster parent when applicable		X
repair family relationships with other related adults		X
improve communication within family members		X

transportation (initial appointments and some meetings whenever staff is available)	X	X
coordination and communication with DCF	X	X
participation in DCF and other meetings	X	X

### DCF Data

The data below provides a snapshot of DCF data.

**Table 1. Careline Reports - CY 2023**

Careline Reports	Number of Reports	Percentage of Reports
SU Reports	4,761	15%
IPV Report	2,711	8%
SU + IPV Reports	745	2%
None	24,255	75%
Total	32,472	100%

**Table 2. Intake Dispositions - Transfer to Ongoing Services by Risk Level - CY 2023**

Office*					Grand Total
	High	Moderate	Low	(blank)	
Bridgeport	121	170	16	4	311
Danbury	44	99	21	2	166
Hartford	155	103	8	2	268
Manchester	113	90	6	4	213
Meriden	29	24	5	1	59
Middletown	41	35	3	0	79
Milford	147	87	18	8	260
New Britain	126	48	2	0	176
New Haven	126	85	9	0	220
Norwalk	67	134	28	1	230
Norwich	153	114	6	3	276
Torrington	30	36	1	0	67
Waterbury	109	69	12	11	201
Willimantic	84	47	2	5	138
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>1141</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2664</b>

\*Central Office and Special Investigation Unit data is excluded to maintain confidentiality due to low numbers.

**Table 3. In-Home Cases - Point in Time**

Region	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
1	337	323	295	296
2	478	425	319	308

3	370	379	320	304
4	468	426	303	302
5	403	379	247	272
6	373	298	196	196
Total	2,429	2,230	1,680	1,678

**Table 4. Out of Home Cases - Point in Time**

Region	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
1	668	540	403	458
2	812	731	534	553
3	993	839	735	700
4	874	685	651	677
5	1045	1015	811	731
6	664	587	481	452
Total	5,056	4,397	3,615	3,571

**Table 5. Permanency Goal Achieved - CY 2023**

Of the 1,561 children that achieved permanency in 2023, 31.7% (n=496) of these children achieved reunification with their parents.

Permanency Goal Achieved	Number of Children Reunified	Percentage of Children Reunified
<12 months	275	55%
12-23 months	130	26%
24-35 months	52	10%
>36 months	39	8%
Total	496	100%

**PURPOSE AND GOAL OF THIS RFI**

The Department is seeking information, ideas and feedback from families, service providers and other interested parties in the design, part or in whole, and potential implementation of a single preservation and reunification program. The goal of this RFI is to broaden the Department’s view and process on the delivery of preservation and reunification services to improve upon the following:

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While current preservation and reunification services have had some positive results, the Department seeks information on opportunities to implement more efficient approaches that would make the services available



statewide, and that utilize evidence-based approaches to standardize the service and provide a structured quality assurance framework. Additionally, the Department has added Quality Parenting Centers (QPC) to the service array, which has expanded visitation opportunities, but also created a gap (serving children 12 years old and under-unless a sibling group) and some delays due to sequencing with other services. The Department is considering the following changes:

- Providing one intervention that follows the family through preservation and reunification;
- Identifying an evidence-based approach(es) that will closely meet the identified needs of the families (MH, SU, IPV, parenting--intervention or linkage);
- Intentionally improving services from individual-focused to services that acknowledge and work with the entire family (child(ren), custodial/non-custodial parent, other household members);
- Utilizing a reunification assessment across all families to quickly reunify or timely identify and address barriers; and
- Utilizing one visitation service to meet the needs of families and children in out of home care.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, CLARIFICATION AND QUESTIONS:** Questions related to submission of responses to this RFI must be submitted, via email, to the contact listed below no later than **4:00 P.M., May 16, 2024**.

Subject line of any email sent containing a question related to this RFI must be: 'Preservation - Reunification Program RFI Questions'.

Answers to all submitted questions will be de-identified and compiled into a Question and Answer document and posted as an addendum to the RFI on both the Department's website and the State Contracting Portal administered through the Department of Administrative Services on May 21, 2024. The Department reserves the right to reject any question submitted after the May 16, 2024 deadline.

### **RESPONDING TO THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

The Department welcomes your response to this RFI by providing feedback to the Concept Questions posed in this document. Respondents may provide feedback to any or all of the Concept Questions.

Submissions must be emailed to the contact person at the email address listed below, no later than 4:00 P.M. Local Time, on **June 27, 2024** with an email subject heading "**Preservation - Reunification Program RFI**". For further information, please contact:

**Ted Sanford**  
**Director, Division of Contract Management**  
**E: [theodore.sanford@ct.gov](mailto:theodore.sanford@ct.gov)**

Submissions should include a cover page with the following information:

- Name of Respondent
- Affiliation (Provider, Parent, etc.)
- Agency Name
- Agency Address
- Respondent's Phone Number
- Respondent's Email Address

Other Response Guidelines

- Number each page of your response
- Include the question number and question above your response
- Page Limit: 12 pages (does not include cover page)
- Submission Format: Electronic only
- Font Size: 12 pt
- Font Type: Times New Roman
- Margins: 1 inch on all sides
- Line Spacing: Double

**CONCEPT QUESTIONS**

Respondents may respond to any or all of the concept questions.

<b>Concept Questions:</b>
1. What role do you have in the child welfare system? Please select from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent/caregiver</li><li>• Existing preservation/reunification community provider</li><li>• Other community provider</li><li>• Attorney or Juvenile Court personnel</li><li>• Other- please specify</li></ul>
2. Please describe the type of experience needed by a community provider to support a strong family engagement program focusing on preservation and reunification intervention.
3. What are some challenges faced in the current service delivery approach, and what are your thoughts about how these can be overcome?
4. Please describe a model or program that follows the family through preservation and reunification efforts. What assessment tools would you utilize?
5. What staff skills, education, and experience would be preferred to deliver strong engagement in this intervention?
6. What program components would be vital? What other components would you suggest and why? See list of components on page 6.
7. What limitations and challenges do you expect, and how would you address?
8. What program interventions and training would support family engagement and success in the program?
9. What traditional and non-traditional engagement strategies do you feel produce positive outcomes for families who are resistant to accepting or continuing with services? Please provide description of strategies.

10. How would services be provided to children, persons with cognitive limitations, families with children of all ages, non-custodial fathers/parents, teen parents, incarcerated parents, and families impacted by substance use, mental health, intimate partner violence, and housing instability/homelessness?
11. What community connections are necessary by the provider to support families in this program? Please provide concrete examples.
12. What formal community connections are challenging to navigate between the provider and other agencies (law enforcement, criminal/juvenile court, corrections, youth service bureaus, housing, early childhood, etc.)? How have you/your agency improved these connections?
13. What specific supports would the provider need from DCF at the Program Lead and local area office level?
14. What options should be available for lengths of service and why?

**RFI PROCESS CLOSURE**

Following the submission date, the RFI process will be considered closed.