

**PROCUREMENT NOTICE**

**State of Connecticut**

**Department of Children and Families**

**LEGAL NOTICE**

The State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families is seeking proposals for **Child First** program.

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) is accepting applications for the provision of Child First program statewide. The intent of this request is to procure parent/caregiver services that enhance the family environment through protective, nurturing, and responsive interactions and support the attachment of young children with their parents/caregivers.

The Request for Proposals is available in electronic format on the CT Source Contracting Portal at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/CTSource>

on the Department's website at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DCF>

or from the Department's Official Contact:

Name: Catherine Santiago  
Address: 505 Hudson Street / Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-981-3322  
E-Mail: DCF.FiscalContracts@ct.gov

A printed copy of the RFP can be obtained from the Official Contact upon request.

Deadline for submission of proposals is **April 20, 2026, at 3:00 PM.**

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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

### ■ A. INTRODUCTION

1. **RFP Name or Number.** RFP # **26030203/ Child First program.**
2. **Summary.** The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) is accepting applications for the provision of Child First program. The intent of this request is to procure parent/caregiver services that enhance the family environment through protective, nurturing, and responsive interactions and support the attachment of young children with their parents/caregivers. DCF will select **up to six providers** to deliver this program across the state.
3. **Synopsis.** Not Available.
4. **Commodity Codes.** The services that the Department wishes to procure through this RFP are as follows:
  - 0600: Services (Professional, Support, Consulting and Misc. Services)
  - 1000: Healthcare Services
  - 2000: Community and Social Services

### ■ B. ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

BFO	Best and Final Offer
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT)
CT	Connecticut
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
DCF	Department of Children and Families
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FY	State Fiscal Year (July 1-June 30)
IRS	Internal Revenue Service (US)
LOI	Letter of Intent
NIMH	National Institute of Mental Health
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
OSC	Office of the State Comptroller (CT)
POS	Purchase of Service
P.A.	Public Act (CT)
QPC	Quality Parenting Center
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)
SFIT	Short-Term Family Integrated Treatment Program
TGH	Therapeutic Group Home
U.S.	United States

- *contractor*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that enters into a POS contract with the Department as a result of this RFP
- *proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP
- *prospective proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that may submit a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP, but has not yet done so

- *subcontractor*: an individual (other than an employee of the contractor) or business entity hired by a contractor to provide a specific health or human service as part of a POS contract with the Department as a result of this RFP

## ■ C. INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Official Contact.** The Department has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFP. The Official Contact is the **only authorized contact** for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the Department. Proposers, prospective proposers, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other Department employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Department about this RFP is strictly prohibited. Proposers or prospective proposers who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Name: Catherine Santiago  
Address: 505 Hudson Street / Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-981-3322  
E-Mail: DCF.FiscalContracts@ct.gov

Please ensure that e-mail screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts e-mails from the Official Contact.

2. **RFP Information.** The RFP, amendments to the RFP, and other information associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact or from the Internet at the following locations:

- Department's RFP Web Page  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DCF>
- State Contracting Portal  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/CTSource>

It is strongly recommended that any proposer or prospective proposer interested in this procurement subscribe to receive e-mail alerts from the State Contracting Portal. Subscribers will receive a daily e-mail announcing procurements and addendums that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFP.

Printed copies of all documents are also available from the Official Contact upon request.

3. **Contract Awards.** The award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding to the Department. The Department anticipates the following:

- Total Funding Available: **\$5,850,000 (annually)**
- Number of Awards: **6**
- Per Contract Funding: **Up to \$975,000 (annually)**
- Contract Term: **1-3 Years, at the discretion of the Department**

4. **Eligibility.** Private provider organizations (defined as nonstate entities that are either nonprofit or proprietary corporations or partnerships), CT State agencies, and municipalities are the only entities eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP.

A current investigation of Medicaid fraud or a judgment involving Medicaid fraud within the past five (5) years shall exclude an entity from participation in this procurement. Proposals from applicants who appear on the United States General Services Administration Excluded Parties List or the State Debarred Contractors List will not be considered. Consideration will be taken for applicants whose agency has required one or more corrective action plans in the past two years. Such applicants are not ineligible, but the history may be a scoring factor depending on circumstances surrounding the corrective action.

**5. Minimum Qualifications of Proposers.** To qualify for a contract award, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications:

- The agency must possess a current, valid Connecticut Business License, and must provide proof of such with submission of the proposal;
- Have a minimum of two years experience (as of the due date of the application) providing relevant services in the DCF areas(s) in which services are to be provided under this RFP. Relevant experience is defined by this RFP as having experience providing services similar to those described in this RFP based on service type (i.e., early childhood, parenting, clinical work), population (adults with children under the age of 6), and demonstrated experience implementing evidence-based practices for the population of focus.
- Demonstrate experience and proficiency collecting and reporting program performance and monitoring data required by contract. These data include but are not limited to reporting to the department numbers of unique clients served, their demographic characteristics, results of standardized measures, presenting problems, length of stay, and discharge status.
- Attest to their ability to obtain Medicaid and other third-party revenue for the provision of Child First when billing is approved.
- Demonstrate use and proficiency of a certified electronic health record (EHR) technology. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act place strong emphasis on the widespread adoption and implementation of EHR. A certified EHR is a system that has been tested and certified by an approved Office of National Coordinator's (ONC) certifying body.

**6. Procurement Schedule.** See below. Dates after the due date for proposals ("Proposals Due") are target dates only (\*). The Department may amend the schedule, as needed. Any change will be made by means of an amendment to this RFP and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the Department's RFP Web Page.

- RFP Planning Start Date: **December 1, 2025**
- RFP Released: **March 2, 2026**
- RFP Conference: **11:00 AM / March 5, 2026**
- Deadline for Questions: **3:00 PM / March 9, 2026**
- Answers Released: **March 12, 2026**
- Letter of Intent Due: **3:00 PM / March 23, 2026**
- Proposals Due: **3:00 PM / April 20, 2026**
- (\*) Proposer Selection: **April 27, 2026**
- (\*) Start of Contract Negotiations: **May 11, 2026**
- (\*) Start of Contract: **July 1, 2026**

**7. Letter of Intent.** A Letter of Intent (LOI) **is required** for this RFP. The LOI is non-binding and does not obligate the sender to submit a proposal. The LOI must be submitted to the Official Contact via e-mail by the deadline established in the Procurement Schedule. The subject line of the email must read, "**Child First RFP / Letter of Intent**". The LOI must clearly identify the sender, including name, postal address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and to which DCF area(s) the sending is applying. It is the sender's responsibility to confirm the Department's receipt of the LOI. **If applying for multiple DCF areas, 1 Letter of Intent may be submitted, but each specific Team being applied for must be indicated.** The Department will not accept proposals from any applicant for any Team for which a Letter of Intent was not submitted. Failure to submit the required LOI in accordance with the requirements set forth herein shall result in disqualification from further consideration.

**8. Inquiry Procedures.** All questions regarding this RFP or the Department's procurement process must be directed, in writing, to the Official Contact before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally- neither in person nor over the telephone, except at the RFP Conference, during which questions will be accepted and answered verbally, recorded, and included with the final release of Questions and Answers. All questions

received before the deadline(s) will be answered. However, the Department will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the Department may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. The Department may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. The agency will release the answers to questions on the date(s) established in the Procurement Schedule. The Department will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and on the Department's RFP Web Page.

- 9. RFP Conference.** An RFP conference will be held to answer questions from prospective proposers. Attendance at the conference is **non-mandatory**, but highly recommended. Copies of the RFP will not be available at the RFP Conference. Prospective proposers are asked to bring a copy of the RFP to the conference. At the conference, attendees will be provided an opportunity to submit questions, which the Department's representatives may (or may not) answer at the conference. Any oral answers given at the conference by the Department's representatives are tentative and not binding on the Department. All questions submitted will be answered in a written amendment to this RFP, which will serve as the Department's official response to questions asked at the conference. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. The agency will release the amendment on the date established in the Procurement Schedule. The Department will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the Department's RFP Web Page.

- Date: **March 5, 2026**
- Time: **11:00 AM**
- Virtual (Teams): <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/28068167232009?p=N1Dz8NqvY7RbkFQs3i>
- Call In: **860 840-2075 / Conference ID: 872 010 875#**

- 10. Proposal Due Date and Time.** The Official Contact is the **only authorized recipient** of proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Proposals must be received by the Official Contact on or before the due date and time:

- Due Date: **April 20, 2026**
- Time: **3:00 PM**

The original proposal must carry original signatures and be clearly marked on the cover as "Original." Unsigned proposals will not be evaluated. The original proposal and each conforming copy of the proposal must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Screening Committee.

Faxed or e-mailed proposals, other than email submission of an electronic copy when submitted in conjunction with all other submission requirements, will not be evaluated. When hand-delivering proposals by courier or in person, allow extra time due to building security procedures. The Department will not accept a postmark date as the basis for meeting the submission due date and time. Proposals received after the due date and time may be accepted by the Department as a clerical function, but late proposals will not be evaluated. At the discretion of the Department, late proposals may be destroyed or retained for pick up by the submitters.

An acceptable submission must include the following:

- one (1) original proposal;
- five (5) conforming copies of the original proposal; and
- one (1) conforming electronic copy of the original proposal)

The electronic copy of the proposal must be emailed to the Official Agency Contact for this procurement. The subject line of the email must read: **Name of Provider / Child First RFP Electronic Proposal Submission / Team <<INSERT>>**. One attachment must be submitted inclusive of the entire proposal

in Portable Document Format (PDF) or similar file format (Sections A-E and H of the Proposal Outline detailed in Section IV of this RFP) and one attachment inclusive of the Budget and Narrative in Excel or similar file format (Section G of the Proposal Outline detailed in Section IV of this RFP). The following naming convention shall be used:

- Proposal: **Name of Provider / Child First Proposal / Team <<INSERT>>**
- Budget: **Name of Provider / Child First Budget / Team <<INSERT>>**

**11. Multiple Proposals.** The submission of multiple proposals in response to this RFP **is** permitted. The Department is requiring the submission of one (1) proposal per Team. If multiple proposals are submitted, a separate email submission of each is required.

**12. Declaration of Confidential Information.** Proposers are advised that all materials associated with this procurement are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Privacy Act, and all rules, regulations and interpretations resulting from them. If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL. In Section C of the proposal submission, the proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. *EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a.* For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

**13. Conflict of Interest-Disclosure Statement.** Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. The Department will determine whether any disclosed conflict of interest poses a substantial advantage to the proposer over the competition, decreases the overall competitiveness of this procurement, or is not in the best interests of the State. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. *Example: "[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85."*

#### ■ D. PROPOSAL FORMAT

**1. Required Outline.** All proposals must follow the required outline presented in Section IV– Proposal Outline. Proposals that fail to follow the required outline will be deemed non-responsive and not evaluated.

**2. Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet is Page 1 of the proposal. Proposers must complete and use the Cover Sheet form provided by the Department in Section IV.I – Forms.

**3. Table of Contents.** All proposals must include a Table of Contents that conforms with the required proposal outline. (See Section IV.)

**4. Attachments.** Attachments other than the required Appendices or Forms identified in Section IV are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required Appendices or Forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.

**5. Style Requirements.** Submitted proposals must conform to the following specifications:

- Binding Type: Loose Leaf, Bound with a Binder Clip
- Dividers: No Dividers

- Paper Size: Standard Letter
- Print Style: 2-sided
- Page Limit: 20 Single-Sided (10 sheets of Paper, printed Double-Side) for Section IV.F (Main Proposal)
- Font Size: 12
- Font Type: Times New Roman
- Margins: Normal
- Line Spacing: 1.5

**6. Pagination.** The proposer's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, including the required Appendices and Forms, must be numbered in the footer.

## **E. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

**1. Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the Department to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the Department will conform with its written procedures for POS procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85).

**2. Screening Committee.** The Department will designate a Screening Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Screening Committee. Only proposals found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Proposals that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Screening Committee may result in disqualification of the proposer.

**3. Minimum Submission Requirements.** All proposals must comply with the requirements specified in this RFP. To be eligible for evaluation, proposals must (1) be received on or before the due date and time; (2) meet the Proposal Format requirements; (3) follow the required Proposal Outline; and (4) be complete. Proposals that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements will not be reviewed further. The Department will reject any proposal that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFP.

**4. Evaluation Criteria (and Weights).** Proposals meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Screening Committee will use to evaluate the technical merits of the proposals. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. The criteria are weighted according to their relative importance. The weights are disclosed below.

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| • Organizational Requirements              | 15 points |
| • Cultural & Linguistically Competent Care | 15 points |
| • Service Requirements                     | 20 points |
| • Staffing Requirements                    | 20 points |
| • Work Plan and Outreach                   | 10 points |
| • Data and Technology Requirements         | 10 points |
| • Financial and Budget Requirements        | 10 points |

**5. Proposer Selection.** Upon completing its evaluation of proposals, the Screening Committee will submit the rankings of all proposals to the Department head. The final selection of a successful proposer is at the discretion of the Department head. Any proposer selected will be so notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Pursuant to Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Order No. 3, any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the Department's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process.

- 6. Debriefing.** Within ten (10) days of receiving notification from the Department, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the ten (10) days. If unsuccessful proposers still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Contact and request a meeting with the Department to discuss the evaluation process and their proposals. If held, the debriefing meeting will not include any comparisons of unsuccessful proposals with other proposals. The Department will schedule and hold the debriefing meeting within fifteen (15) days of the request. The Department will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation or selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.
- 7. Appeal Process.** Proposers may appeal any aspect of the Department's competitive procurement, including the evaluation and proposer selection process. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Department head. A proposer may file an appeal at any time after the proposal due date, but not later than thirty (30) days after an agency notifies unsuccessful proposers about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the thirty (30) days. The filing of an appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reason for the Department to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an appeal may be obtained from the Official Contact.
- 8. Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the Department's contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General.

## II. MANDATORY PROVISIONS

### ■ A. POS STANDARD CONTRACT, PARTS I AND II

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the provisions of Parts I and II of the State's "standard contract" for POS:*

Part I of the standard contract is maintained by the Department and will include the scope of services, contract performance, quality assurance, reports, terms of payment, budget, and other program-specific provisions of any resulting POS contract. A sample of Part I is available from the Department's Official Contact upon request.

Part II of the standard contract is maintained by OPM and includes the mandatory terms and conditions of the POS contract. Part II is available on OPM's website at: [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/standard\\_contract](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/standard_contract)

Note:

Included in Part II of the standard contract is the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice (pursuant to C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2)) advising executive branch State contractors and prospective State contractors of the ban on campaign contributions and solicitations. If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department and the resulting contract has an anticipated value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts has an anticipated value of \$100,000 or more, the proposer must inform the proposer's principals of the contents of the SEEC notice.

Part I of the standard contract may be amended by means of a written instrument signed by the Department, the selected proposer (contractor), and, if required, the Attorney General's Office. Part II of the standard contract may be amended only in consultation with, and with the approval of, the Office of Policy and Management and the Attorney General's Office.

### ■ B. ASSURANCES

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly gives the following assurances:*

- 1. Collusion.** The proposer represents and warrants that the proposer did not participate in any part of the RFP development process and had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFP prior to its issuance. The proposer further represents and warrants that no agent, representative, or employee of the State participated directly in the preparation of the proposer's proposal. The proposer also represents and warrants that the submitted proposal is in all respects fair and is made without collusion or fraud.
- 2. State Officials and Employees.** The proposer certifies that no elected or appointed official or employee of the State has or will benefit financially or materially from any contract resulting from this RFP. The Department may terminate a resulting contract if it is determined that gratuities of any kind were either offered or received by any of the aforementioned officials or employees from the proposer, contractor, or its agents or employees.
- 3. Competitors.** The proposer assures that the submitted proposal is not made in connection with any competing organization or competitor submitting a separate proposal in response to this RFP. No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the proposer to induce any other organization or competitor to submit, or not submit, a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition. The proposer further assures that the proposed costs have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other organization or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition. Nor has the proposer knowingly disclosed the proposed costs on a prior basis, either directly or indirectly, to any other organization or competitor.
- 4. Validity of Proposal.** The proposer certifies that the proposal represents a valid and binding offer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto. The proposal shall remain valid for a period of 180 days after the submission due date

and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement. At its sole discretion, the Department may include the proposal, by reference or otherwise, into any contract with the successful proposer.

5. **Press Releases.** The proposer agrees to obtain prior written consent and approval of the Department for press releases that relate in any manner to this RFP or any resultant contract.

■ **C. TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:*

1. **Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
2. **Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the Department shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a proposer in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
3. **Exclusion of Taxes.** The Department is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Proposers are liable for any other applicable taxes.
4. **Proposed Costs.** No cost submissions that are contingent upon a State action will be accepted. All proposed costs must be fixed through the entire term of the contract.
5. **Changes to Proposal.** No additions or changes to the original proposal will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the Department may request and authorize proposers to submit written clarification of their proposals, in a manner or format prescribed by the Department, and at the proposer's expense.
6. **Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline submission of proposals, unless specifically requested by the Department. The Department may ask a proposer to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations or further explanations to clarify information contained in a proposal. Any such demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will be at a time selected and in a place provided by the Department. At its sole discretion, the Department may limit the number of proposers invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation and may limit the number of attendees per proposer.
7. **Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the Department, a proposer must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, financial standing, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFP. The Department may make onsite visits to an operational facility or facilities of a proposer to evaluate further the proposer's capability to perform the duties required by this RFP. At its discretion, the Department may also check or contact any reference provided by the proposer.
8. **RFP Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFP nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the Department or confer any rights on any proposer unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the proposer and the Department and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the proposer or for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful proposer is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the Department and, if required, by the Attorney General's Office.

**■ D. RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATE**

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:*

- 1. Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFP shall ultimately be determined by the Department.
- 2. Amending or Canceling RFP.** The Department reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP on any date and at any time, if the Department deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
- 3. No Acceptable Proposals.** In the event that no acceptable proposals are submitted in response to this RFP, the Department may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
- 4. Award and Rejection of Proposals.** The Department reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFP. The Department may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The Department reserves the right to reject the proposal of any proposer who submits a proposal after the submission date and time.
- 5. Sole Property of the State.** All proposals submitted in response to this RFP are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFP or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.
- 6. Contract Negotiation.** The Department reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFP. The Department further reserves the right to contract with one or more proposer for such services. After reviewing the scored criteria, the Department may seek Best and Final Offers (BFO) on cost from proposers. The Department may set parameters on any BFOs received.
- 7. Clerical Errors in Award.** The Department reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be void *ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the proposer.
- 8. Key Personnel.** When the Department is the sole funder of a purchased service, the Department reserves the right to approve any additions, deletions, or changes in key personnel, with the exception of key personnel who have terminated employment. The Department also reserves the right to approve replacements for key personnel who have terminated employment. The Department further reserves the right to require the removal and replacement of any of the proposer's key personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by the Department.

**■ E. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:*

- 1. Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210(b).** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Proposers

are generally advised not to include in their proposals any confidential information. If the proposer indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFP, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The proposer has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a proposer may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.

- 2. Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.
- 3. Consulting Agreements, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Proposals for State contracts with a value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, excluding leases and licensing agreements of any value, shall include a consulting agreement affidavit attesting to whether any consulting agreement has been entered into in connection with the proposal. As used herein "consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information or (C) any other similar activity related to such contract. Consulting agreement does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of C.G.S. Chapter 10 as of the date such affidavit is submitted in accordance with the provisions of C.G.S. § 4a-81. The Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5) is available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics_forms)  
IMPORTANT NOTE: A proposer must complete and submit OPM Ethics Form 5 to the Department with the proposal.
- 4. Gift and Campaign Contributions, C.G.S. §§ 4-250 and 4-252(c); Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Orders No. 1, Para. 8 and No. 7C, Para. 10; C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2).** If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with an anticipated value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, the proposer must fully disclose any gifts or lawful contributions made to campaigns of candidates for statewide public office or the General Assembly. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The gift and campaign contributions certification (OPM Ethics Form 1) is available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics_forms)  
IMPORTANT NOTE: The successful proposer must complete and submit OPM Ethics Form 1 to the Department prior to contract execution.
- 5. Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. §§ 4a-60(a)(1) and 4a-60a(a)(1).** If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the proposer must provide the Department with *written representation* or *documentation* that certifies the proposer complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties. A nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The nondiscrimination certification forms are available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/nondiscrim\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/nondiscrim_forms)  
IMPORTANT NOTE: The successful proposer must complete and submit the appropriate nondiscrimination certification form to the awarding Department prior to contract execution.

### III. PROGRAM INFORMATION

#### ■ A. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) was established in 1969 as the Department of Children and Youth Services. Over time, its responsibilities expanded to include child welfare (1974), children's mental health and education services (1975), and substance use services for youth (1988). In 1993, the agency was renamed the Department of Children and Families to reflect its evolving mission of providing comprehensive, family-focused care and support across Connecticut.

The vision of the Department is ***that CT's children are safe and sound within loving and supportive families.*** The Department's mission is: ***Partnering with communities and empowering families to raise resilient children who thrive.*** We embark on this work embracing the wisdom of families with lived experience. The Department seeks to sharpen the safety lens through primary prevention across the child welfare system through 6 strategic goals:

- **Safety:** Keep children and youth safe, with focus on the most vulnerable populations
- **Permanency:** Connect systems and processes to achieve timely permanency
- **Wellbeing:** Contribute to child and family wellbeing by enhancing assessments and interventions
- **Racial Justice:** Eliminate racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within the Department
- **Prevention:** Early intervention and support for families upstream
- **Workforce:** Engage the workforce through an organizational culture of mutual support

The mission and vision are grounded in a core set of beliefs that encompass the Department's vision for how to provide services to Connecticut's children and families. Over the years, the Department's contracted service milieu has grown to encompass approximately 80 contracted service types overseen by 100 community service agencies providing 350 individual programs to Connecticut's children and their families.

The **Early Childhood and Family Support Programs** unit resides within the Division of Clinical and Community Consultation and Support (CCCSD) under the Office of Behavioral Health and Well-Being. The Early Childhood and Family Support Unit oversees programs in the following areas: post DCF intake, parenting, preservation, reunification, visitation, and early childhood. These services have the common goal of safely preserving or maintaining the family intact or reaching timely permanency. The unit supports these programs through active contract management standards including data analysis, development of best practices, and primarily with collaborations with providers and regional staff. The Child First program will be embedded in this caregiver and early childhood service system to focus on the primary attachment relationships.

#### ■ B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Child First is an evidenced-based, psychotherapeutic model that provides home-based assessment, family plan development, parent-child therapeutic intervention and education, and care coordination/case management for high-risk families with pregnant people and/or children from birth to five years old, to decrease social-emotional and behavioral problems, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect. This service uses a relationship-based approach that focuses on the primary attachment relationships of the young child and supports the parent, through its two-person service team, to enhance the family environment via protective, nurturing, and responsive interactions. To learn more about Child First, please visit [Changent](#).

##### **Target Population**

The target population will be DCF involved families with children prenatal to five years old who are at the highest risk due to exposure to trauma and chronic adversity with young children showing early signs of emotional, behavioral, or developmental concerns. DCF will prioritize families with children who face the most significant risks to healthy development and who require strengthening of the caregiver-child attachment to promote responsive caregiving, reduce the impact of toxic stress, and support healthy development.

Priority case assignments will be given to the following:

- Children presenting with emotional/behavioral difficulties and/or dysregulation
- Child is of an age in which alternative services are limited or inaccessible due to their age
- Cases in which child is in a foster home and reunification is planned to occur imminently
- Pregnant youth who require intensive in-home services

Referrals to the program will require DCF to remain open at minimum 120 days from date of referral.

**Referral Process**

Referrals will be accepted during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Referrals will be submitted by DCF with the accompanying releases of information. All referrals will be assigned to a Child First team within two (2) business days of receiving a completed referral.

**Waitlist**

Waitlists will not be maintained by the Child First team beyond cases that can open within 30 days of an anticipated opening. The Contractor will notify DCF weekly with their capacity and any anticipated openings within 30 calendar days. If Child First is not available within 30 days of a referral, other services will be identified for the family by the Child First team.

**Crisis Coverage**

The Child First teams are expected to have an emergency and crisis intervention plan in place for each family included in the Child and Family Plan of Care. The Emergency and Crisis section describes the resources parents/caregivers have available to respond to a crisis such as family members, friends or other supports, and services providers.

In order to support families, the Child First teams will arrange for a system of responding to crisis situations/emergencies. Twenty-four hours/7 days coverage for crisis intervention must be provided 52 weeks per year including holidays, evenings and weekends. These responses will be through phone, virtual, or in-person contact, depending on case circumstances.

**Case Assignment and Introductory Meeting**

An introductory meeting will take place with the family, DCF area office staff, and the Contractor to ensure a clear and smooth intake process. The Child First teams will facilitate the Introductory Meeting within 3 calendar days of assignment to exchange information, review the contents of the referral, and any activities/services under way. If circumstances require a more immediate response, DCF may request the visit occur on the same day or within 24-48 hours of the case assignment. The Introductory Meeting will be held in person at a time and location convenient for the family. After the DCF Social Worker leaves the Child First team may begin the intake process, including scheduling upcoming appointments.

**Key Elements of the Child First Model****a. Assessment Services**

Child First teams conduct a comprehensive, strength-based child and parent assessment for each family referred within sixty (60) days of meeting with the family. Child First teams complete assessment tools per model Assessment Protocol and Program Fidelity Checklist. For all children under the age of six, the Child First teams will help the parent complete developmental screening through [Sparkler](#) or other DCF approved format for continued monitoring during and after Child First ends. They will also help the family to develop a [CAPTA Family Care Plan](#) or review an existing Family Care Plan, if applicable.

**b. Child and Family Plan of Care**

Child First teams will complete an initial *Child and Family Plan of Care* for each family within 30 days of beginning intervention services. This plan will identify strengths, needs, goals, objectives, services to be provided, therapeutic parent-child activities, timelines and collaborating community partners. The plan for each family will be reviewed and updated at least every three months. The initial and updated plans will be shared with DCF for inclusion in its own case planning process.

**c. Parent-Child Intervention**

The Child First teams schedule home-based visits with each family two times per week during the first month assessment period. Beginning with the second month, visits will continue weekly unless the unique goals, priorities, needs, and culture of the family lead to a change in frequency. Contact should be in-person, in home with **all household members and any secondary or alternate caregivers of the children, especially fathers and father figures**. Services may also be provided at community sites at the request of the family or a community provider.

The focus of the home visits will be on the parent-child relationship and helping the **parents** (inclusive of father, father figures, or another caregiver) to:

- i. promote age-appropriate development in the child;
- ii. understand the child's unique processing ability;
- iii. engage in interactive play;
- iv. learn ways to deal with difficult behaviors;
- v. be protective of the child;
- vi. share love and communication with the child;
- vii. recognize the origin of personal feelings and actions;
- viii. maintain supportive relationships within family and community.

**d. Reflective Care Coordination**

The Child First team also provide reflective care coordination services to families to decrease environmental stressors. These stressors can be found in, but are not limited to, areas of: parenting psychoeducation, employment, housing, food, health care, social, emotional development and education. The Care Coordinator will take the lead in making referrals to appropriate service providers and helping the parents refer themselves.

**e. Collaboration and Reporting**

The Child First teams maintain contact with the assigned DCF Social Worker at minimum monthly or more frequently based on the needs of the family. Additionally, a written Child First Monthly Report is provided to the DCF Social Worker and provides information on the following areas:

- i. Engagement/Attendance of both parents, including secondary and alternate caregivers, in Child First;
- ii. Participation in other services;
- iii. Changes in the ABCD Paradigm;
- iv. Children's participation in school/daycare (as appropriate), medical/health services, developmental/mental health services (as appropriate);
- v. Connections to community supports;
- vi. Progress with the strategies in the Child and Family Plan of Care;
- vii. Barriers/challenges; and
- viii. Additional services or supports recommended.

The Child First team will also meet with the Program Lead within 30 days of beginning 6-month assessments or upon completion of 6-month assessments, whichever occurs sooner.

In addition, the Child First teams are required to attend scheduled statewide meetings and individual meetings with the DCF Program Lead as needed to discuss staffing, program utilization, contract obligations, and data reporting.

**Transportation**

Care Coordinators may provide transportation to initial clinical, basic needs, or child related appointments, as appropriate and as available. Care Coordinators should assist parents with their transportation needs outside of the program.

**Transition and Discharge Planning**

Beginning one to three months prior to discharge, the Child First team will work closely with each family to create and implement a plan that will help ensure that their transition out of the Child First program will be successful. The Child First Discharge Summary and last Child and Family Plan of Care will be provided/mailed to DCF and the parents/caregivers within one week of discharge.

**Length of Service**

Length of service will be based on the family's level of identified need but generally about 9 months. Extensions beyond 9 months may be granted depending on the needs of the family and child, with prior DCF approval. There must be a clear rationale/purpose for extending the length of service with clear expectations and goals established for the family to achieve within that designated timeframe. Subsequent requests for extension will require a meeting with the Child First team, DCF staff, and Program Lead.

**Staffing Model and Qualifications**

Child First will be delivered by one Clinician and one Care Coordinator who work together to serve their caseload of families. The Clinical Supervisor will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of Child First with fidelity by coaching and supporting all team members through case consultation, home visit shadowing, and providing regular model-specific supervision. These supervisory activities help to ensure all staff are working with families in alignment with Child First specified activities, timelines, frequency of contacts, goals and expectations. Clinical Supervisors will oversee **4 Clinicians and 4 Care Coordinators**.

The Clinical Supervisor will hold a master's degree and be licensed in the state of Connecticut in social work, psychology, or other appropriate licensure category commensurate with their degree and which allows them to provide direct clinical care and supervise other clinical staff. Supervisors must possess at least five years' experience working with children and families, and at least three years supervisory experience is preferred. The Clinical Supervisor will be trained and certified in Child First within the timelines specified by the model developer.

Clinicians will hold a master's degree and be Provisionally Licensed and/or Independently Licensed to provide mental health treatment (e.g., LCSW, LMFT, LPC, clinical psychologist, etc.). If not independently licensed, the Clinician should be pursuing licensure. The Clinicians will be trained and certified in Child First. Clinicians also assume responsibility for assessing the family's needs, providing the Child First model, and coordinating the provision of services by the Care Coordinator and other community professionals. Clinicians reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of the population being served. At least one Clinician is required to be bilingual in **Spanish**. Clinicians work a flexible schedule, including some nights and weekends, to accommodate individual family needs and in order to respond to a crisis, as required by the model. Each Child First Team typically carries between 12 and 16 families,

such that they are able to complete a minimum of 12 home visits per 40-hour work week. Caseload varies based on frequency/intensity of service, success of planned visits, and need for increased travel time for very rural areas.

It is preferred that Care Coordinators have bachelor's degree in child development, psychology, nursing, human services, or related field and have at least 3 years of experience providing supportive services to families with complex needs. Care Coordinators reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of the population being served and work flexible schedules including early mornings, early evenings, and weekends. Care Coordinators must have knowledge of the public systems relevant to the identified target population. They will be trained and certified in the Child First model. Care Coordinators must have excellent communication, networking, and organizational skills, and have the ability to work with individuals from diverse cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds. At least one Care Coordinator is required to be bilingual in **Spanish**. The Care Coordinator is responsible for advocating, mentoring, engaging, empowering, and supporting families to take the lead in their own Child and Family Plan of Care and help connect family members to needed resources within their own community. Each Child First Team typically carries between 12 and 16 families, such that they are able to complete a minimum of 12 home visits per 40-hour work week. Caseload varies based on frequency/intensity of service, success of planned visits, and need for increased travel time for very rural areas.

### **Staff Training and Supervision**

The Child First teams will ensure that program staff receives initial training from the Child First model developer in order to appropriately implement the model including the assessment tools. This initial training period will include reflective clinical consultation weekly from a senior licensed clinical member of the model developer's staff. The Child First teams will also participate in all on-going Child First specialty trainings, booster trainings, and topical trainings as provided by the model developer. Trainings should increase staff knowledge in the areas of parenting, child development, child welfare, mental health and substance use treatment and recovery, trauma, intimate partner violence, ethics, criminal/juvenile court proceedings, and engagement/retention skills through Motivational Interviewing, especially of fathers and father figures. The Contractor monitors training participation to support continued education and staff development.

The Clinical Supervisor will provide ongoing reflective clinical supervision in accordance with the best practice standards for both the Clinician and Care Coordinator. Supervision will include on-going meetings in alignment with program and model expectations. Ad-hoc supervision by the clinical director/supervisor will always be available. Fidelity forms will be integrated into supervision. Individual performance plans will be developed to strengthen the skills of all staff members.

All Child First cases will be reviewed by the Clinical Supervisor at least monthly, and case specific directives will be documented in the client record. The Clinical Supervisor should promote engagement with families in a culturally sensitive and strength-based manner. Supervision will include the review of charts/documentation, services, Child and Family Plans of Care, and all case activities.

Case supervision and staff professional development planning will be based on data, chart reviews, staff observations, and other quality improvement process. Supervision is documented and is used as part of an overall performance review.

### **Child First Fees**

Child First teams are expected to pay \$60,000 annually directly with the model developer. Fees include trainings, clinical consultation, technical assistance, and other changing services.

### **Child First Team Catchment Areas and Capacity**

Funding for the Child First teams described in this RFP was determined in accordance with state appropriations for this program. DCF expects to fund one (1) Child First team for each DCF Region. A team is comprised of nine (9) full-time staff including 1 Supervisor, 4 Clinicians, and 4 Care Coordinators. Caseload per Clinician and Care Coordinator pair ranges between 12-16 for an annual capacity of 16. Child First team annual capacity is 64 families completing Child First.

### **Data Reporting**

Child First teams will submit to the Department of Children and Families information necessary for monitoring and evaluation when requested by the Department, such as the annual staffing demographics survey, and any other information, as requested by the Program Lead.

Child First teams will also submit individual, client level data to the Department's Provider Information Exchange (PIE), or other information system as required by the Department. The Child First teams will ensure that the data submitted under PIE, or other system, is in conformance with the applicable data specifications and pick lists. Furthermore, the data must use the conventions and logic as determined by the Department to ensure accurate, unduplicated client counts. This data will, as set forth by DCF, be sent to the Department and/or the Department's designated vendor(s) at an interval specified by DCF.

Additionally, the Child First team will submit individual and client level data to the model developer's database as required for model fidelity and quality assurance.

### **Model and Contract Compliance**

The Child First teams must demonstrate substantial compliance with the Child First model initially and on an annual basis as determined by the DCF approved Child First model developer.

The Child First teams will ensure that all Child First program components adhere to model fidelity. This will include, but will not be limited to:

- i. participation in appropriate trainings, specialty and topical trainings.
- ii. participation in reflective clinical consultation with the model developer during the training period and as needed thereafter;
- iii. ongoing, weekly reflective clinical supervision for all staff members by the site clinical director/supervisor
- iv. timely entry of all data into the DCF PIE;
- v. attaining benchmarks levels in metric and outcome data;
- vi. completion of the Child First fidelity framework for each staff and reaching fidelity standards;
- vii. participation in regular meetings of local systems of care (e.g. DCF, Birth to Three) and collaboratives;
- viii. monthly meetings with the DCF Child First Area Office liaison and social work staff on all open cases receiving Child First services;
- ix. participation, by the Contractor's clinical director, in monthly Child First clinical directors' meetings led by the model developer;
- x. review of videotapes of staff members interacting with clients and demonstrating model adherence;
- xi. review of clinical charts of children and families served, with all appropriate documentation;
- xii. completion of the *Program Fidelity Checklist*, meeting benchmarks indicating fidelity to the model;
- xiii. participation and successful progress in any Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

### **Model Outcome Measures and Benchmarks**

The Child First teams' work will be measured by the model developer on the following measures and benchmarks:

- i. Assessment and Plan Development
- ii. Parent-Child Therapeutic Intervention and Education
- iii. Case management
- iv. Model Compliance
- v. Client Outcomes

Benchmark Performance and Accreditation Status will be shared with DCF on an annual basis.

### **Quality Assurance**

If the Child First teams do not meet Child First fidelity benchmarks, the Child First teams will participate in a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) developed with the DCF Child First Program Lead and the model developer. DCF may identify other areas requiring a PIP separate from fidelity. Compliance with the Child First model will include the Child First team's success in addressing PIP issues.

In order to maintain a minimum practice standard and to continuously improve the quality of Child First, an internal and external quality assurance plan shall be in place. The Child First team will develop their own quality assurance plan, which reviews programmatic areas related to staffing, training, supervision, delivery of service, documentation, data, and performance measures, following the scope of services.

External quality assurance reviews will be conducted by the model developer and DCF.

### **Performance Outcome Measures**

The Child First team will work to achieve the following performance outcome measures:

- i. 85% of families complete Child First
- ii. 90 % of families have their first face to face contact within 7 days of case assignment
- iii. 75% of families that complete Child First will have children demonstrate improvement in at least one domain previously identified as an area of need
- iv. 60% of families that complete Child First have identified needs addressed through available community connections as shown by the Service Need Inventory at discharge

## **■ C. MAIN PROPOSAL COMPONENTS**

### **1. Organizational Requirements (15 points)**

(a) Agency Qualifications: Provide a description of:

1. Agency qualifications, background, training, and experience that will lead you to achieve all of the Child First requirements;

2. Your agency's knowledge of CT's child welfare, behavioral health treatment, early childhood systems and practices, and key stakeholders; and
  3. Your agency and staff's experience delivering evidence-based services and/or Child First or comparable services.
  4. If the agency or program being proposed holds any certifications or licensures, please detail the type and how long it has been held. Applicants must also demonstrate that they possess appropriate licensure to provide clinical services to children. Such licensure must be provided in the applicant's proposal as [Appendix 1](#).
  5. Please include a letter of support or fidelity letter, in [Appendix 2](#), by Changent demonstrating a readiness to implement Child First or fidelity status for current or past providers.
- (b) Organizational Structure: Describe your agency's organizational structure and governance, and its relationship to implementing and administering this project successfully specifically, as it relates to staffing this project. Include, in [Appendix 3](#), your agency's organizational chart. The chart should clearly identify where this program will be positioned within your organization's overall structure, and this program's relationship to other relevant services.
- (c) Corrective Action: If the agency was under a Corrective Action Plan for any DCF-funded program in the past two (2) years, proposals must identify the program, the primary problem(s), and how the problem(s) was (were) addressed.

## 2. Cultural & Linguistically Competent Care (15 points)

The Department of Children & Families is committed to ensuring that its service providers deliver effective, equitable, understandable, trauma informed and respectful quality care. The services delivered must be responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, experiences of racism and/or other forms of oppression, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs. Applicants must demonstrate throughout all their responses, that the children and families receiving services in their program are approached, engaged and cared for in a culturally and linguistically competent manner, including but not limited to: Cultural identity, racial and/or ethnic, religious/spiritual ascription, gender, physical capability, cognitive level, sexual orientation, and linguistic needs. Within a broad construct of culture, service provision must also be tailored to age, diagnosis, developmental level, geographical, economical, and educational needs. Please ensure that proposals detail the following:

- (a) Culturally Diverse Communities:
1. Provide any data your agency has that demonstrates your knowledge of the dynamics and diversity within the community you are proposing to serve. Include supporting data about the race, ethnicity, culture and languages of the communities you are seeking to serve as [Appendix 4](#) to the proposal.
  2. Demonstrate your organization's experiences in serving diverse communities.
  3. Describe any anticipated challenges your organization may encounter in the community you are proposing to serve and your organization's experience in meeting and overcoming similar challenges in other service communities (please use specific examples).
- (b) Culturally Diverse Families: Detail the strategies that your organization has utilized to successfully establish rapport and trust with families related to experiences of racism and other forms of oppression and how this influences and guides client engagement and treatment planning. Describe your agency's policies, practices, and data collection mechanisms. (Supporting data may be included as [Appendix 5](#). For existing or previous Department-contracted providers, this would include PIE data or similarly reported data that demonstrates the effectiveness of your organization's strategies.)
- (c) Culturally Responsive and Diverse Organization:
1. Describe your agency's organizational structure and the level of diversity among the agency's managers, executives and Board of Directors. Please include a Workforce Analysis as Appendix 10.
  2. Utilizing your Workforce Analysis, please provide a narrative assessment of how your agency's staffing composition is reflective of the population in the community(ies) you are proposing to serve.
  3. If your agency has developed and implemented a CLAS Plan (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services), please describe what follow-up has occurred within your agency to further the Plan's implementation. Provide a copy of your agency's CLAS Plan as [Appendix 6](#).

### 3. Service Requirements (20 points)

The use of sub-contractors is not permitted for Child First services.

Proposals should address each of the following areas.

- (a) Evidence-Based Services: Describe your agency's prior success implementing evidence-based services aimed at early childhood behavioral health treatment, parenting supports, and caregiver-child engagement. Include in your response successes and barriers related to your agency's meeting evidence-based service delivery benchmarks (e.g., staffing, training, timely certifications, model fidelity, consultations) and outcomes expectations. Also describe if these services were provided to DCF-involved families. Data should be used to demonstrate your success whenever it is available. Provide Child First specific description if you are a current or past provider.
- (b) Treatment/Service Modalities: Describe your agency's prior success specifically achieving the goals and services defined below. These goals include:
1. supporting families achieve stability, increase child safety, and improve well-being of the whole family;
  2. using a relationship-based approach focusing on attachment of the young child and working with parents on ways to create a protective, nurturing, responsive family environment;
  3. assertively engaging of **all** household members to engage in services, especially fathers and father figures, including solutions to common barriers (work schedules, mistrust of systems, child court involvement, safety concerns, etc.);
  4. timely conducting comprehensive assessments of the family using validated tools;
  5. continuously assessing for child safety and regularly communicating with DCF;
  6. establishing emergency and crisis interventions with families;
  7. connecting families with community supports during services and as part of discharge planning; and
  8. meeting program outcomes.

Please be specific about the approaches and programs used and **include data** to support all your claims. Include Child First data (if a current or past provider) or other program data/information from at least the last 3 years.

- (c) Community Needs, Partnerships, and Presence:
1. Community Service Needs and Available Resources: Please describe identified needs of infants and children under the age of 6 along with their caregivers, within the major cities/towns in the catchment areas. Include any gaps in early childhood development services, family support programs and resources that address social/emotional determinants of health.
  2. Collaborative Partnerships: Provide a detailed and specific description of your agency's history and success of partnering with both traditional and non-traditional community services, early childhood programs, family support organizations, healthcare providers, institutions that support caregivers, pro-social activities for families, and services related to early intervention and prevention for young children. Responses should address needs identified in question 3(c)1 above.
  3. Community Presence: Please describe the level of current presence your agency has in the proposed catchment area, particularly in relation to services for infants, young children, and their caregivers. Include examples of outreach, engagement, and participation in community initiatives that support early childhood development.

### 4. Staffing Requirements (20 points)

- (a) Staff Recruitment and Retention: Proposals must include the following:
1. Complete the table below with your agency contractual staffing numbers by role (supervisor, clinician, case manager/therapist assistant/support staff) and the percentage of staffing capacity by the same categories for community based behavioral health programs serving families for the end of the fiscal years 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. This table can be submitted as **Appendix 7**;

Name of Program/Service	Staff Position	Contracted FTE	Actual FTE % (n) on 6/30/2022	Actual FTE % (n) on 6/30/2023	Actual FTE % (n) on 6/30/2024	Actual FTE % (n) on 6/30/2025

2. A detailed description of how staff have been and will be recruited and selected. Include your agency's plan to recruit a diverse staff, including Spanish-speaking staff, who reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the communities you plan to serve;
3. A description of how the staffing plan will be appropriate to the language, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and ethnic/racial/cultural factors of the target population. Include data on your agency's ability to hire and retain multi-cultural/multi-lingual staff;
4. A staff retention plan detailing measures taken to reduce staff turnover. The plan should describe how staff hiring and retention has been achieved to maintain contract staffing levels or how challenges in recruitment and turnover have been addressed; and
5. A description of how the program will continue to provide services that are timely, effective, and true to the models when regularly scheduled staff experience sickness, training, vacancies, leaves of absence, etc.

Note: Preference will be given, through the scoring tool utilized by the Review and Evaluation Committee for this RFP, to applicants with a demonstrated ability to adhere to their current staffing plan and those who have a demonstrated history of maintaining low vacancy rates.

- (b) Staff Training: Child First staff will receive model specific training. DCF expects that staff would benefit from and will receive other trainings organized by the applicant agency. Applications must describe additional training or coaching the applicant agency plans to offer Child First staff (e.g., behavioral health, child development, parenting, Motivational Interviewing, racial justice, recovery, etc.). Describe the training topic, staff role(s) expected to participate, the intensity (e.g., introductory, advanced), and the frequency of training, as well as how this training better prepares staff to meet the needs of the target population.

#### 5. Work-Plan and Outreach (10 Points)

Describe your agency's work plan to specifically achieve the goals stated within this RFP, including action steps and timeline for successful implementation of Child First within 90 days after the contract is executed.

- (a) Implementation Experience: Include a narrative description of how your agency's prior successes and challenges informed the design and implementation of this work plan.
- (b) Implementation Timelines: Include proposed timelines for staff hiring, training and transition plans, if applicable, so that there will be no disruption in present services.
- (c) Partnership Development: Include a plan to establish or strengthen partnerships with behavioral health providers, early childhood systems, father supports, basic needs services including housing, local collaboratives, etc.

Assume a July 1, 2026 start date and provide specific dates when action steps will be completed.

#### 6. Data and Technology Requirements (10 Points)

- (a) Quality Improvement Experience: Describe your agency's prior experience collecting and reporting data for program administration, continuous quality improvement (CQI), and for reporting on program progress, specifically for Child First if a current or past provider. Describe the resources (i.e., human, fiscal, physical plant, technology) your agency dedicates to information management, continuous quality improvement, and data analytics. Include your agency's CQI processes, and examples of your agency's success meeting the data and reporting requirements of funders. Describe how this experience positions your organization to meet the data and reporting requirements of this RFP.

- (b) Outcome Achievements: Proposals must describe the agency's success in achieving positive outcomes related to the outcomes listed. Current Child First providers should minimally include Child First outcomes. Others should include outcomes related to those listed. Specific examples must be provided to support all claims.

## 8. COST PROPOSAL COMPONENT

### a. Financial Requirements (2 points)

Applicants must submit cover letters from their auditor for the last three (3) annual audits of their agency and a copy of their most recent financial audit, included as **Appendix 8**. If the three (3) most recent audits are available via the Office of Policy and Management's EARS system, such must be noted in the proposal, and cover letters and the last audit should **not** be included in the proposal.

If less than three (3) audits were conducted, details must be provided as to why, and any supporting documentation assuring the financial efficacy of the applicant agency should be included (i.e., an accountant prepared financial statement, a tax return, a profit and loss statement, etc.).

### b. Budget Requirements (8 points)

Proposals must contain an itemized budget on the budget form delineated in Section IV (I.h), of this RFP. All startup costs must be clearly identified as 1 line item in the budget.

Applicants must submit their budgets to include the full proposed cost of operating the program, including a **detailed description** of billing practices on maximizing reimbursements (commercial and Medicaid insurance agreements, reimbursement rates, and the percentage of revenue expected to be reimbursed). Please provide a **detailed description** of at least two billable programs where reimbursements are maximized, including percentage of reimbursement related to program costs and amount received. Applicants are free to propose a budget total at their discretion, although the total requested DCF funding must not exceed the current DCF funding for the Child First program.

A budget narrative must be provided, explaining all costs contained in the budget. All start-up costs must be listed separately and clearly detailed in the budget narrative.

All other funding, including agency financial support, must be identified.

Note: Preference will be given, through the scoring tool utilized by the Review and Evaluation Committee for this RFP, to applicants with a minimum staffing salary of \$65,000 for Clinicians and \$55,000 for Care Coordinator, as well as engagement stipends for families.

**IV. PROPOSAL OUTLINE**

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<b>A. Cover Sheet</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>B. Table of Contents</b> . . . . .	<b>2</b>
<b>C. Declaration of Confidential Information</b> . . . . .	<b>Etc.</b>
<b>D. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement</b> . . . . .	
<b>E. Main Proposal</b> . . . . .	
<b>1. Organizational Requirements</b>	
a. Agency Qualifications . . . . .	
b. Organizational Structure . . . . .	
c. Corrective Actions . . . . .	
<b>2. Cultural &amp; Linguistically Competent Care</b>	
a. Culturally Diverse Communities . . . . .	
b. Culturally Diverse Families . . . . .	
c. Culturally Responsive and Diverse Organization . . . . .	
<b>3. Service Requirements</b>	
a. Evidenced-Based Services . . . . .	
b. Treatment/Service Modalities . . . . .	
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a. Staff Recruitment & Retention . . . . .	
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a. Implementation Experience . . . . .	
b. Implementation Timelines . . . . .	
c. Partnership Development . . . . .	
<b>6. Data and Technology</b>	
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<b>F. Cost Proposal Component</b> . . . . .	
<b>1. Financial Requirements</b> . . . . .	
<b>2. Budget Requirements</b> . . . . .	
<p>To access the Consolidated Budget Form, please go to:  <a href="https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Contract-Management/Home">https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Contract-Management/Home</a></p> <p>Scroll to the "RFP Forms" Section and access the "DCF RFP Budget POS" link</p>	
<b>G. Appendices</b> . . . . .	
<b>1. Appendix #1 Gift &amp; Campaign Contribution Certification.</b> . . . . .	
<b>2. Appendix #2 Consulting Affidavit</b> . . . . .	
<b>3. Appendix #3 CHRO Contract Compliance Package, Parts I-III</b> . . . . .	

To access the CHRO Package, please go to: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Contract-Management/Home>  
Scroll to the "Miscellaneous Information" Section and access the "Bidders CHRO Compliance Package" link

- 4. **Appendix #4 Table of Organization** . . . . .
- 5. **Appendix #5 Certificate of Occupancy / Proof of Siting** . . . . .
- 6. **Appendix #6 Proof of Connecticut Business Licensure** . . . . .
- 7. **Appendix #7 Proof of Clinical Licensure** . . . . .
- 8. **Appendix #8 Culturally Diverse Communities** . . . . .
- 9. **Appendix #9 Culturally Diverse Families** . . . . .
- 10. **Appendix #10 Culturally Diverse Organizations (Workforce Analysis)** . . . . .
- 11. **Appendix #11 Culturally Diverse Organizations (CLAS Plan) (if appl.)** . . . . .
- 12. **Appendix #12 Community Partnerships (if appl.)**. . . . .
- 13. **Appendix #13 Financial Profile (if req.)** . . . . .

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**V. RFP ATTACHMENTS**

**I. Attachment #1: Letter of Intent**

To be completed and submitted to the Official Agency Contact for this procurement by the due date delineated in this RFP.

**II. Attachment #2: Proposal Cover Sheet**

To be utilized as Page 1 of all proposals (as indicated in Section IV.A of this RFP).

**III. Attachment #3: Gift & Campaign Contribution Certification**

To be completed and submitted with all proposals (as indicated in Section IV.H (1) of this RFP).

**IV. Attachment #4: Consulting Affidavit**

To be completed and submitted with all proposals (as indicated in Section IV.H (2) of this RFP).

**Attachment #1****LETTER OF INTENT****(MANDATORY NON-BINDING)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Our agency is planning to apply for funding in response to the RFP entitled **Child First** at the following location(s):

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6

AGENCY NAME:
FEIN:
AGENCY ADDRESS: (street, city ,state, zip)
AGENCY CONTACT:
POSITION/TITLE:
TELEPHONE NUMBER:
FAX NUMBER:
EMAIL ADDRESS:

Mandatory Letter of Intent must be received by **3:00 p.m.** on **March 23, 2026**, to **Catherine Santiago** (**DCF.FiscalContracts@ct.gov**).

**PROPOSAL COVER SHEET**

**Child First  
Request for Proposals**

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6

**Name of Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Application  
Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person  
Phone & Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person  
Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This application must be signed by the applicant's executive director or other individual with executive oversight for agency services delivered in Connecticut*

By submitting this application, I attest that all the information included within the application is true.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment #3**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
GIFT AND CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION CERTIFICATION**

*Written or electronic certification to accompany a State contract with a value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 4-250 and 4-252(c); Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Orders No. 1, Para. 8, and No. 7C, Para. 10; and C.G.S. §9-612(g)(2)*

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Complete all sections of the form. Attach additional pages, if necessary, to provide full disclosure about any lawful campaign contributions made to campaigns of candidates for statewide public office or the General Assembly, as described herein. Sign and date the form, under oath, in the presence of a Commissioner of the Superior Court or Notary Public. Submit the completed form to the awarding State agency at the time of initial contract execution and if there is a change in the information contained in the most recently filed certification, such person shall submit an updated certification either (i) not later than thirty (30) days after the effective date of such change or (ii) upon the submittal of any new bid or proposal for a contract, whichever is earlier. Such person shall also submit an accurate, updated certification not later than fourteen days after the twelve-month anniversary of the most recently filed certification or updated certification.

**CHECK ONE:**     Initial Certification     12 Month Anniversary Update (Multi-year contracts only.)  
 Updated Certification because of change of information contained in the most recently filed certification or twelve-month anniversary update.

**GIFT CERTIFICATION:**

As used in this certification, the following terms have the meaning set forth below:

- 1) "Contract" means that contract between the State of Connecticut (and/or one or more of its agencies or instrumentalities) and the Contractor, attached hereto, or as otherwise described by the awarding State agency below;
- 2) If this is an Initial Certification, "Execution Date" means the date the Contract is fully executed by, and becomes effective between, the parties; if this is a twelve-month anniversary update, "Execution Date" means the date this certification is signed by the Contractor;
- 3) "Contractor" means the person, firm or corporation named as the contactor below;
- 4) "Applicable Public Official or State Employee" means any public official or state employee described in C.G.S. §4-252(c)(1)(i) or (ii);
- 5) "Gift" has the same meaning given that term in C.G.S. § 4-250(1);
- 6) "Principals or Key Personnel" means and refers to those principals and key personnel of the Contractor, and its or their agents, as described in C.G.S. §§ 4-250(5) and 4-252(c)(1)(B) and (C).

I, the undersigned, am a Principal or Key Personnel of the person, firm or corporation authorized to execute this certification on behalf of the Contractor. I hereby certify that, no gifts were made by (A) such person, firm, corporation, (B) any principals and key personnel of the person firm or corporation who participate substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating state contracts or (C) any agent of such, firm, corporation, or principals or key personnel who participates substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating state contracts, to (i) any public official or state employee of the state agency or quasi-public agency soliciting bids or proposals for state contracts who participates substantially in the preparation of bid solicitations or request for proposals for state contracts or the negotiation or award of state contracts or (ii) any public official or state employee of any other state agency, who has supervisory or appointing authority over such state agency or quasi-public agency.

I further certify that no Principals or Key Personnel know of any action by the Contractor to circumvent (or which would result in the circumvention of) the above certification regarding **Gifts** by providing for any other Principals,

Key Personnel, officials, or employees of the Contractor, or its or their agents, to make a **Gift** to any Applicable Public Official or State Employee. I further certify that the Contractor made the bid or proposal for the Contract without fraud or collusion with any person.

**CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION CERTIFICATION:**

I further certify that, on or after December 31, 2006, neither the Contractor nor any of its principals, as defined in C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(1), has made any **campaign contributions** to, or solicited any contributions on behalf of, any exploratory committee, candidate committee, political committee, or party committee established by, or supporting or authorized to support, any candidate for statewide public office, in violation of C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2)(A). I further certify that **all lawful campaign contributions** that have been made on or after December 31, 2006 by the Contractor or any of its principals, as defined in C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(1), to, or solicited on behalf of, any exploratory committee, candidate committee, political committee, or party committee established by, or supporting or authorized to support any candidates for statewide public office or the General Assembly, are listed below:

**Lawful Campaign Contributions to Candidates for Statewide Public Office:**

<u>Contribution Date</u>	<u>Name of Contributor</u>	<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Description</u>

**Lawful Campaign Contributions to Candidates for the General Assembly:**

<u>Contribution Date</u>	<u>Name of Contributor</u>	<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Description</u>

Sworn as true to the best of my knowledge and belief, subject to the penalties of false statement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Contractor Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Authorized Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Authorized Official

**Subscribed and acknowledged before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Commissioner of the Superior Court (or Notary Public)**

