



Allegheny County Department of Human Services  
**Request for Qualifications**

**Forensic Psychological and/or  
Psychiatric Evaluators**

**RFQ Posting:**

Thursday, July 14, 2022

**Deadline for Questions:**

3 p.m. Eastern Time ten business days prior to the next submission deadline to ensure answer by the deadline.

**Submission Deadline:**

Applications will be reviewed quarterly, with the deadline for submission for review at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on the second Thursday of March, June, September and December of each year.

**Estimated Decision/Notification:**

Quarterly in January, April, July and October.

Allegheny County Department of Human Services  
One Smithfield Street Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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# Acronyms and Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following capitalized words are defined as follows for purposes of this RFQ:

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Qualified Applicant to provide the Contract Services
2. Allegheny County: A home rule county and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3. Applicant: The individual or Group Practice submitting an Application in response to this RFQ
4. Application: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFQ
5. Bonfire: The County's online procurement software. Applicants must have a Bonfire account to submit a Response to this RFQ
6. Collateral Sources: Information gathered by the Forensic Evaluator from third-party interviews or the review of records to ensure that the Forensic Evaluation Report is accurate and incorporates various and diverse sources of data
7. Competency Evaluation: An evaluation that assesses: 1) whether a child has sufficient present ability to consult with their lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and 2) whether the child has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against them
8. Contract Services: The specific services which the Qualified Applicant agrees to provide to the County in response to this RFQ as more particularly described in the Scope of Services in the Agreement
9. Court: Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County Family Division (Children's Court, Adult Division and/or Juvenile Probation)
10. Custody Cases: Private litigation filed by a parent or party that results in legal proceedings in the Court to determine the child's time with each party and other important parenting considerations that reflect the best interests of the child
11. Delinquency Cases: Legal proceedings of the Court that involve: 1) children between the ages of 10 through 17 who have allegedly committed a Delinquent Act and who are in need of treatment and rehabilitation or supervision by the Court or 2) individuals under the age of 21 who have committed a Delinquent Act before reaching the age of 18
12. Delinquent Act: An act, in violation of a law, that would be a crime if committed by an adult
13. Dependency Cases: Legal proceedings of the Court involving:
  - a. Children under the age of 18 who are without proper parental care or control, subsistence or education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental or emotional health or morals
  - b. Children who have been placed for care or adoption in violation of law
  - c. Children who have been abandoned by their parents, guardian or other custodian
  - d. Children who are without a parent, guardian or legal custodian
  - e. Children who are habitually and without justification truant from school while being subject to compulsory school attendance

- f. Children who have committed a specific act or acts of habitual disobedience of the reasonable lawful commands of their parent, guardian or other custodian and who are ungovernable and found to be in need of care, treatment or supervision
  - g. Children under the age of 10 who have committed a Delinquent Act
  - h. Children who have been formerly adjudicated dependent and are under the jurisdiction of the Court and commit an act which is defined as ungovernable
  - i. Children who have been referred for an informal adjustment of a Delinquent Act and who commit an act which is defined as ungovernable
  - j. Children who are born to a parent whose parental rights with regard to another child have been involuntarily terminated within three years immediately preceding the date of birth of the subsequent child and the conduct of the parent poses a risk to the health, safety or welfare of the children
  - k. Individuals who were adjudicated dependent before reaching the age of 18 years and who, after reaching the age of 18 years, request the Court to retain jurisdiction. In no event can an individual remain under the jurisdiction of the Court beyond the age of 21 years
14. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services.
  15. DHS Bonfire Portal: A Bonfire webpage specific to the Allegheny County Department of Human Services where Applicants can view open, past and awarded solicitations released through Bonfire
  16. Family Division: The Division of the Fifth Judicial District of Allegheny County that handles divorce, child and spousal support, equitable distribution of property, child custody, protection from abuse, delinquency, dependency, termination of parental rights and adoption cases
  17. Forensic Evaluation: The neutral and objective investigation of facts and evidence in a structured manner in anticipation of a proceeding or the consideration of a specific legal question in connection with a Court proceeding. There are three Forensic Evaluation areas as part of this RFQ: Dependency Cases, Delinquency Cases and Custody Cases
  18. Forensic Evaluator: A licensed and credentialed psychological and/or psychiatric professional who completes Forensic Evaluations and produces comprehensive written Reports
  19. Group Practice: A sole group or organizational practice with multiple practitioners qualified to schedule and complete required Forensic Evaluations and Reports in a timely manner
  20. Interactional Assessment: An assessment protocol grounded in attachment, child development and family systems theories wherein the evaluator joins the family and interviews the parent(s) and/or caregiver(s), beginning with the children present. The assessment systematically explores parental philosophies, attitudes and beliefs about child-rearing
  21. OMHSAS: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
  22. Permanency: The standard of practice, based on the particular needs and best interests of the child, designed to provide the child with continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime family relationships. The hierarchy of permanency goals for children is: 1) reunification; 2) adoption; 3) permanent legal custodianship; 4) permanent placement with a fit and willing relative and; 5)

another planned permanent living arrangement (considered only when the other four options are ruled out)

23. Qualified Applicant: The Applicants(s) qualified by the DHS and the Court to provide the Contract Services
24. Report: A written formal summation and representation of the completed Forensic Evaluation
25. Response Form: The Word document in which Applicants respond to requested information about this RFQ
26. RFQ: Request for Qualifications
27. RFQ Opportunity Page: The Bonfire webpage on which the RFQ and all supporting documents are listed and where the RFQ submission documents must be uploaded for an Application to be considered for review
28. TPR: Termination of Parental Rights. The legal action of severing all legal and custodial ties between a child and a parent

# The RFQ at a Glance

## *Purpose*

Allegheny County, on behalf of its Department of Human Services (DHS) child welfare office, and the Fifth Judicial District of Allegheny County, Family Division (Children's Court, Adult Division and/or Juvenile Probation) (henceforth collectively or individually referred to as the Court), is seeking licensed and credentialed Qualified Applicants to conduct forensic psychological and/or psychiatric evaluations of children and families involved in dependency, delinquency and custody proceedings.

A forensic psychological and/or psychiatric evaluation (henceforth referred to as a Forensic Evaluation) is defined as the neutral and objective investigation of facts and evidence in a structured manner in anticipation of a Court proceeding or the consideration of a specific legal question in connection to a Court proceeding. DHS and the Court use Forensic Evaluations to better understand and make decisions about families involved with them. Forensic Evaluators are professionals who complete Forensic Evaluations by conducting interviews with subject children and families and gathering information from Collateral Sources into a comprehensive written report (henceforth referred to as Report). This RFQ is soliciting qualified Forensic Evaluators for three Forensic Evaluation areas: Dependency Cases, Delinquency Cases and Custody Cases (which are described in detail in Section 2).

## *Award Details*

Qualified Applicants will be eligible to be selected to conduct Forensic Evaluations pursuant to referrals from either the Court or DHS (see Section 2.6 for referral process). The County intends to qualify one or more Applicant(s) through this RFQ.

## *Who can apply*

Applicants may be individuals or a Group Practice (an entity with multiple practitioners and a centralized intake). Applicants should be doctoral-level licensed psychologists or board-certified psychiatrists. Applicants may apply to one, two or all three areas: Dependency Cases, Delinquency Cases and Custody Cases.

Applicants do not need to have an existing contract with Allegheny County to apply, but Applicants must meet all of Allegheny County's contractual requirements (see Section 6: Contract Requirements for Qualified Applicants) and have the programmatic, financial and staffing capability to provide the Contract Services.

**Applications must be submitted electronically by logging into or creating an account on Bonfire (See Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal).**

## *Timeline*

Applications will be reviewed quarterly. Deadline for Applicants to submit questions about this RFQ is 3 p.m. Eastern Time ten business days prior to the next submission deadline to ensure answer by the deadline. Applications must be submitted by 3 p.m. Eastern Time on the second Thursday of March, June, September and December. We expect to notify Applicants of the County's decision to qualify in January, April, July and October following the submission deadline.

### ***Who we are***

On behalf of Allegheny County, DHS is the issuing office for this RFQ.

DHS is the largest department of Allegheny County government and provides publicly funded services to more than 200,000 people annually, in areas including child welfare, behavioral health, aging, intellectual disability, homelessness and community services.

More information about DHS is available at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx>

## **Section 1: Why We Are Issuing this RFQ**

A Forensic Evaluation is the neutral and objective investigation of facts and evidence in a structured manner, conducted in anticipation of a court proceeding or the consideration of a specific legal question in connection to a proceeding related to Dependency, Delinquency or Custody for the purposes of this RFQ (e.g., competency, capacity, ability, mental status, intellectual functioning). Depending on the nature of the legal question at hand, the Forensic Evaluation process may include clinical and other related interviews, psychosocial assessment, other psychological testing and/or psychiatric evaluation and the collection of written or oral information from Collateral Sources. Information from Collateral Sources may include interviews with third parties (e.g., family members, roommates, friends, neighbors, counselors/mental health professionals, teachers, probation officers) and review of existing records (e.g., court transcripts, information provided by child welfare and juvenile probation, therapist records, criminal records).

Families involved in Dependency, Delinquency and Custody cases often are facing challenging life situations. Being the subject of a Forensic Evaluation adds stress during this difficult time. Therefore, DHS and the Court are seeking to continually improve the Forensic Evaluation process for vulnerable families in the County. DHS and the Court desire high quality Forensic Evaluations that are thorough, respectful to families, culturally sensitive and ethically sound so that Court proceedings may be fair, informed and in the best interest of the children and families involved.

## **Section 2: What We Are Looking For**

Allegheny County is soliciting Applications from doctoral-level licensed psychologists and board-certified psychiatrists to provide Forensic Evaluation services on an as-needed basis. Qualified Applicants may be individuals or Group Practices with expertise in one or more of three case areas: Dependency, Delinquency and Custody Cases. Qualified Applicants must provide high quality Forensic Evaluations according to best practice standards and produce comprehensive written Reports using a standardized format within timelines determined by case requirements.

## **2.1 Eligibility and Expectations**

DHS and the Court are interested in Applicants who have the doctoral-level education, licensing, credentials and training necessary to provide Forensic Evaluations using professional strategies and creative solutions that best serve children and families. Applicants must be licensed and enrolled/credentialed in good standing with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Medical Assistance Program, maintain valid Act 33/34 clearances and maintain appropriate levels of malpractice and liability insurance. Applicants must not have a history of ethical violations or civil and/or criminal actions taken against their license. Applicants must have a thorough understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and ethical standards<sup>1</sup> as they pertain to Forensic Evaluations. Appropriate and allowable clinical assistance from qualified students, Master's prepared licensed and non-licensed practitioners, and Master of Social Work practitioners is defined more specifically in [this link](#).

DHS and the Court are seeking Qualified Applicants who recognize the unique challenges that a family faces and who will engage families in the Forensic Evaluation process in a sensitive, culturally appropriate way. Qualified Applicants must have the ability to assess, evaluate and make treatment recommendations for people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Qualified Applicants must provide services that best meet the needs of children and families and be collaborative partners with DHS and providers in the behavioral health continuum of care. Qualified Applicants must use information from these partners and seek information from all possible Collateral Sources to develop a comprehensive Report.

Family members referred for evaluation often face issues that call for expertise in a specialized subject area that includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of LGBTQIA+ issues, domestic violence, sexual abuse and substance use. Qualified Applicants may have training or experience in one or more of these specialized subject areas.

In order to meet the needs of families, Qualified Applicants must have the ability to conduct Forensic Evaluations in an office location that is accessible to public transportation or be willing to conduct evaluations in a designated safe, confidential and neutral site, if appropriate. They must have flexibility to provide some night (after 6 p.m.) and/or weekend hours.

## **2.2 Dependency Cases**

### *Dependency Forensic Evaluations Description*

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the [American Medical Association's Code of Ethics](#)



DHS's child welfare office protects children from abuse and neglect and works with families to provide a safe and permanent home for children. The Court provides timely and comprehensive resolutions of legal issues that promote the best interest of children and families. Guided by these missions, DHS and the Court take part in Dependency Cases, which primarily involve abused and/or neglected children. Dependency Cases can result in the family participating in services that allow children to remain in the home or to safely return to the home if they have been removed from the care of a parent or guardian. If it is not possible to safely return the children to the parents due to abuse or neglect, DHS tries to find a permanent home for the children through placement with a fit and willing relative, adoption, permanent legal custodianship or long-term foster care. The children may be placed with kin or others qualified to accept children into their homes.

DHS and the Court use Forensic Evaluations for Dependency Cases as a mechanism to help inform their work in supporting families and their decisions about placement and permanency planning for children. While there are times when Court-ordered Forensic Evaluations are necessary to determine the most appropriate course of action, DHS and the Court want to avoid subjecting children and families to duplicative, unnecessary or redundant evaluations. Qualified Applicants will assist the Court and DHS in placement and permanency planning for children by conducting Forensic Evaluations that:

- Provide an objective assessment of the contributing variables leading to the Dependency petition
- Recommend the types of services needed for the children or the parent(s) so that the children may remain or, in the case of removal, may return safely to the parent(s)
- Inform the Court's understanding regarding prognosis for change
- Assist the Court in reaching a decision about parental rights that serves the best interest, needs and welfare of the children relating to Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings

The Court determines a final legal decision in Dependency Cases. Reports assist in that decision-making by providing the Court with relevant details and accurate assessment of the family's circumstances and the child's needs. Qualified Applicants shall not explicitly suggest a decision regarding termination of parental rights or other Court decisions in their Reports.

Forensic Evaluations for Dependency Cases can include clinical assessment, formal testing and/or clinical observation. Qualified Applicants may be required to conduct: individual psychological or cognitive evaluations of parents and/or identified children; developmental assessments of children; evaluations to assess the bond and relationship between the children and parents or between the children and foster parents; evaluations to assess the capacity to parent; and, occasionally, sex offender risk assessments. Qualified Applicants must make an effort to speak with or obtain a written report from the children's and family members' current mental health service providers.

#### *Dependency Forensic Evaluations Referrals*

Forensic Evaluations to determine the best interests of the child will take place through referrals by DHS or by Court order. Regardless of the method for initiating the evaluation, all referrals will set forth a specific referral question and/or issue. Typical referral questions may include, but are not limited to:

- What is the nature and quality of the bond between parent and child?
- Is the parent currently able to provide adequate care and safety for the child?
- What interventions, including formal treatment, supports and/or services, are indicated in order to assist the parent and/or child(ren) in addition to what is already in place (if anything)?
- What is the quality of the child's relationship with foster parent(s), what would be the effects of reuniting this child with the family of origin (family prior to removal), and how best could this be done? What is the likely impact of separating this child from their parent(s) and/or siblings?

Qualified Applicants must review the Court's orders and findings in every case. If a Qualified Applicant determines it necessary to conduct an assessment of a family member or other individual(s) not listed on the referral or Court order, the Qualified Applicant must obtain approval from DHS or the Court prior to conducting the additional assessment(s).

#### *Dependency Forensic Evaluations Report Standards*

Qualified Applicants must develop Reports for Dependency Cases in accordance with the specifications manual that DHS will provide upon qualification. Reports must be consistent with best practice evaluation standards as outlined in the Commonwealth's "[Guidelines for Best Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service](#)," published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), and other guidelines, including those from [Community Care Behavioral Health Organization](#) (CCBH) and others.<sup>2</sup> Qualified Applicants must complete and issue a Report within 14 calendar days of the last completed Forensic Evaluation appointment. The Report should include the date(s) of the evaluation appointment(s), the date that the Report was completed and the specific source of all relevant information (whether obtained directly or from Collateral Sources). Qualified Applicants must submit the Report to the judge who ordered the Forensic Evaluation, the caseworker, the caseworker supervisor, the [KidsVoice](#) Attorney, the [Juvenile Court Project](#) Parent Advocate Attorney, the Permanency Department, and the Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel, if applicable. If the child also is involved in Delinquency, then Qualified Applicants must submit the Report to the juvenile probation officer.

#### *Dependency Forensic Evaluations Training Requirement*

Qualified Applicants must attend training required by DHS and the Court within six months of executing the contract with the County. This training includes, but is not limited to, child welfare onboarding training; Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) training; and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) training.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the [New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Guidelines for Expert Evaluations and Child Abuse/Neglect Proceedings \(Mental Health\)](#)

## 2.3 Delinquency Cases

### *Delinquency Forensic Evaluations Description*

Delinquency Cases involve children or youth who have allegedly committed a Delinquent Act, in violation of a law, that would be a crime if committed by an adult. A child or youth who has committed a Delinquent Act is in need of treatment and rehabilitation or supervision by the Court. Forensic Evaluations for Delinquency Cases assist the Court in mental health treatment and/or mental health placement planning, competency determinations and, occasionally, assessments to determine risk for future sexual offenses or other anti-social or aggressive behaviors. Delinquency Case Forensic Evaluations are not intended to recommend interventions related to criminogenic needs identified by the probation department. Qualified Applicants shall not recommend specific providers, but shall recommend characteristics for treatment and interventions.

Sometimes a Forensic Evaluation is ordered to assist the Court in determining whether a Delinquency Case should be transferred to the Adult Criminal Division of the Court. In these cases, the Court is responsible for determining whether the transfer of the case would serve the public interest, after considering a number of factors including the child's mental capacity and whether the child is amenable to treatment, supervision and rehabilitation as a juvenile. In other instances, a Delinquency Forensic Evaluation may include a Competency Evaluation to assess whether a child has sufficient ability to consult with their lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and whether the child has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against them.

### *Delinquency Forensic Evaluations Referrals*

DHS or the Court may order a Forensic Evaluation for a child for the purpose of mental health treatment and/or placement planning or, in juvenile probation cases, competency determinations. Children requiring a Delinquency Forensic Evaluation may be living at home, placed in foster or kinship care, or residing in another placement facility. Qualified Applicants must schedule all Delinquency Forensic Evaluations within two business days following the receipt of the order or referral. Qualified Applicants must conduct the evaluation within 20 days.

### *Delinquency Forensic Evaluations Report Standards*

For Delinquency Case Forensic Evaluation referrals, Qualified Applicants must submit a written Report according to "[Life Domain Format for Psychiatric/Psychological Evaluations: Initial and Continued Care](#)" (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The Report should pay particular attention to:

- Level of social and intellectual functioning
- Decision-making capabilities

- Social and family supports in child’s life
- Degree of support needed for the child to function independently in the community
- History of psychotropic medication use
- Level of mental health care necessary

For Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) referrals, a psychiatric Forensic Evaluation is required. Qualified Applicants must follow “Guidelines for Best Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service,” published by OMHSAS.

An interim report must be electronically submitted within 72 hours of the interview to the judge who ordered the Forensic Evaluation, the active probation officer, probation supervisor, assistant district attorney, assistant public defender or defense counsel of record, Juvenile Probation Office Placement Management Department and Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel. Qualified Applicants must electronically submit the final full Report within 14 calendar days following the last appointment.

## **2.4 Custody Cases**

### *Custody Forensic Evaluations Description*

Custody Case Forensic Evaluations assist the Court in determining each parent or party’s custodial time and decision-making ability/authority for a child. Custody Forensic Evaluations are assigned and contracted and follow a pay structure determined by the Court. Forensic Evaluations conducted for Custody Cases may result in recommendations about:

- Primary or shared legal and physical custody
- Visitation and/or parenting time
- Decision-making
- Counseling for the family, parent, party and/or child
- Mental health and/or drug and alcohol treatment for the parent, party and/or child
- Safety planning in cases of abuse and/or domestic violence
- Reunification considerations
- Communication between parents or parties

Custody Forensic Evaluations may include, but are not limited to: assessments of all parents and parties involved; child interviews; psychological testing; child-parent observations; assessments of evaluations done by other professionals; consideration of verbal or written information from Collateral Sources; and testimony and review of Court records. Some Custody Cases may involve an Interactional Assessment, where a Qualified Applicant interviews the parent(s) and/or caregiver(s), beginning with the children present. In an Interactional Assessment, parents are encouraged to share their ideas about their involvement with social services, the purpose of the assessment and any concerns they may have about their children.

### *Custody Forensic Evaluations Referrals*

The scope of a Custody Forensic Evaluation referral may vary according to the needs of the particular case and the specific questions to be addressed. The Court may order a full-scale psychological evaluation, including standardized tests, assessments, recommendations and interviews of parents, caregivers, children and other household members. Qualified Applicants must clarify the scope requested prior to beginning the Forensic Evaluation. Qualified Applicants must conduct and complete the Forensic Evaluation in support of the best interests of the child.

In lieu of a full psychological evaluation, the Court may instead order an issue-specific evaluation, an individual-specific evaluation, an addendum to an original Report or an updated Report. The Court may order a specialized test or assessment in Custody Cases where concerns of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse exist.

Applicants for Custody Forensic Evaluations must have an accommodating policy that allows for a specified number of *pro bono* or sliding scale referrals where the parties are indigent.

### *Custody Forensic Evaluations Report Standards*

Full Forensic Evaluations and subsequent Reports must be completed within 60 calendar days of the entry of the appointment order or within the timeframe specified by the Court. Other evaluations mentioned above may require an earlier Report completion date. Reports must be written according to APA Guidelines of Practice and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Model.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.5 Group Practice**

Applicants may be individuals or a Group Practice with multiple practitioners. Group Practices must have a centralized intake coordination function and an administrative staff with considerable experience with insurance and third-party billing. A Group Practice must have flexibility to provide some night and/or weekend hours.

A Group Practice is qualified based upon the practitioners in its practice at the time of the Application. If a Group Practice would like to add an additional practitioner after the Group Practice has been qualified through this RFQ, then the individual practitioner must submit an Application and be qualified using the evaluation process described in this RFQ.

## **2.6 Referral Process**

The majority of referrals to Qualified Applicants will be for Forensic Evaluations pursuant to a Court order or a Court-related need. On occasion, DHS may request Forensic Evaluations for individuals or families for additional considerations (e.g., aging, intellectual or developmental limitation or disability, serious mental illness or psychiatric disorder). Qualified Applicants must meet the minimum technology requirements to receive referrals through the County's case management system (i.e., Key Information and Demographic System, or KIDS).

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<sup>3</sup> See [APA Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings](#) and [Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Model Standard of Practice for Child Custody Evaluations](#)

DHS and the Court anticipates the need for approximately 1,500 Forensic Evaluations each year, including approximately:

- 1,200 Dependency Evaluations
- 300 Delinquency Evaluations
- 100 Custody Evaluations

Qualified Applicants are not guaranteed a minimum number of Forensic Evaluations. DHS and the Court will assign evaluations based on the designated case type, expertise in any specialized subject area, referral history, and geography and hours of operation that accommodate the family's needs. Consideration will also be given to preferences specified by the judge, family, caseworker, and/or probation officer.

All Applicants must have experience billing insurance and other third-party billing. DHS is considered to be the payer of last resort, and Qualified Applicants must check any and all primary and secondary insurance billing eligibility for each evaluation completed prior to billing the County. Many Forensic Evaluations are billable to CCBH. Applicants must have existing valid contracts with CCBH or be eligible to participate in the CCBH network by the time of the first referral.

## **2.7 Testimony**

Qualified Applicants must be available to testify in Court, as needed, as the Court's witness. The Court and/or another party may contact the Qualified Applicant in advance to prepare for testimony. In many cases, the Qualified Applicant may testify by telephone; however, the Qualified Applicant also may have to appear in Court. It is also possible that the Court may decide to admit the Qualified Applicant's Report into evidence without the Qualified Applicant's testimony, provided that the Report was delivered in a timely way to all appropriate parties and that no one objects.

## **Section 3: Application Requirements and Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated based upon the evaluation criteria described in detail below. Applicants must address their qualifications in their Application by responding to the specifically-requested items or questions in the Response Form. Applicants should download and type their responses directly into the Response Form available on the Active Solicitations webpage at [www.allegheycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.allegheycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).

Each case area will be evaluated and scored separately. To achieve a total score for each case area, an Applicant's score from the Applicant Experience section will be added to their score from a case section. The maximum score a Dependency Cases application can receive is 80 points; the maximum score a Delinquency Cases application can receive is 70 points; and the maximum score a Custody Cases application can receive is 75 points. The Group Practice

section is scored on its own and the maximum score that it can receive is 15 points. Applications from Group Practices should expressly indicate the expertise of the practice as a whole, but may highlight the particular expertise held by one or more of the practitioners. Please refer to the Response Form for further detail on scoring.

### **Applicant Experience (35 points possible)**

- Understanding of the role of a Forensic Evaluator (5 points)
- Provided documents demonstrate: appropriate education and background for a Forensic Evaluator; licensed and enrolled/credentialed in good standing with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Medical Assistance Program; maintained Act 33/34 clearances; and appropriate levels of malpractice and liability insurance (a Group Practice's documents must cover all affiliated personnel) (5 points)
- Have existing valid contracts with CCBH or be eligible to participate in the CCBH network by the time of the first referral (5 points)
- Knowledge of and adherence to the relevant ethical standards, principles and codes of conduct for the professional discipline (e.g., psychology, psychiatry, social work), and no history of ethical violations or civil and/or criminal actions taken against the Applicant's license (5 points)
- Cultural competence and the ability to assess, evaluate and make treatment recommendations for people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds and ability to recognize the particular challenges and contributing difficulties that an individual or family may face as a result (5 points)
- Training and experience in a specialized subject area such as knowledge of LGBTQIA+ issues, domestic violence, sexual abuse and substance use (5 points)
- Ability to conduct evaluations in an office location that is accessible to public transportation or be willing to conduct evaluations in a designated safe, confidential and neutral site, if appropriate, and have flexibility to provide some night and/or weekend hours (5 points)

### **Dependency Cases (45 points possible)**

- Educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Dependency Cases (5 points)
- Understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Dependency Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Understanding of and experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in connection with issues related to Dependency Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to Court-directed questions and issues (5 points)
- Appropriate approach and process for Dependency Case Forensic Evaluations (5 points)
- Understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Dependency Cases and have the ability to schedule appointments and complete Reports within required time frames (5 points)

- Knowledge of and experience with the continuum of treatment options and community resources available to families (e.g., mental health and behavioral health services) (5 points)
- Three (3) de-identified Dependency Case Forensic Evaluation Reports (15 points)
  - Sample 1 (5 points)
  - Sample 2 (5 points)
  - Sample 3 (5 points)

### **Delinquency Cases (35 points possible)**

- Educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Delinquency Cases (5 points)
- Understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Delinquency Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Understanding of and experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in connection with issues related to Delinquency Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to Court-directed questions and issues (5 points)
- Understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Delinquency Cases and have the ability to schedule appointments and complete Reports within required time frames (5 points)
- Three (3) de-identified Delinquency Case Forensic Evaluation Reports (15 points)
  - Sample 1 (5 points)
  - Sample 2 (5 points)
  - Sample 3 (5 points)

### **Custody Cases (40 points possible)**

- Educational degrees, licenses, certifications, specialized training and/or forensic experience related to Custody Cases (5 points)
- Understanding of current relevant laws, statutes, national guidelines and standards as they pertain to Custody Cases (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) (5 points)
- Understanding of and experience in the types of psychological evaluations that may be employed to: 1) evaluate adults and children, as appropriate, in connection with issues related to Custody Cases and 2) perform various other evaluative assessments, as required, related to Court-directed questions and issues (5 points)
- Understanding of the amount of time, hourly rate and any other costs, if applicable, required to perform the services for Custody Cases and the ability to schedule appointments and complete Reports within required time frames (5 points)
- An accommodating policy that allows for a specified number of *pro bono* or sliding scale evaluations in custody matters where the parties are indigent (5 points)
- Three (3) de-identified Custody Case Forensic Evaluation Reports (15 points)
  - Sample 1 (5 points)
  - Sample 2 (5 points)



- Sample 3 (5 points)

### **Group Practice (15 points possible)**

- Employ highly qualified licensed practitioners who meet all required qualifications and have a strong oversight and supervision process (5 points)
- A centralized intake process for all cases (5 points)
- Flexibility to offer evening and/or weekend hours for appointments (5 points)

## **Section 4: How to Submit an Application**

### **4.1 Submission Process**

- a. Applicants should take time to review and understand the RFQ in its entirety including:
  - The background (see Section 1: Why We Are Issuing this RFQ)
  - The narrative (see Section 2: What We Are Looking For)
  - The requirements (see Section 3: Application Requirements and Evaluation Criteria)
  - The evaluation process (see Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Application)
- b. Applicants must use the Response Form to develop your Application. Type your responses to each requested item directly into the Response Form. It is available on the RFQ Opportunity Page and on our Active Solicitations website with the RFQ announcement at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- c. Applicants must submit a complete Application, which includes the following attachments that are available on our Active Solicitations website:
  - Response Form
  - Résumé/CV
  - Proof of Medical Malpractice Insurance
  - Proof of practicing license in good standing
  - Proof of Act 33/34 clearances
  - Three (3) de-identified Forensic Evaluation Reports for the case type(s) applied for
  - Group Practice Applicants must submit documents for all practitioners who seek qualification
- d. Applicants should not send any attachments other than those listed above and on the Response Form.
- e. Make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within page limits that may be specified in the Response Form.
- f. **Applications must be submitted electronically by logging into or creating an account on Bonfire at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> and uploading the required submission documents to the [RFQ Opportunity Page](#) no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the second Thursday of March, June, September and December to be considered for review for that round. If you are having trouble making an account or uploading your documents, please contact Bonfire Support.**

**You can also reach out to the DHS Procurement Team at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us) or (412) 350-6352.**

- g. All Applications must be submitted before the deadline! Once the deadline has passed, the RFQ Opportunity Page will no longer accept Applications. If an Application is late, it will be rejected and will not be presented to the Evaluation Committee (as described in Section 5 below) for review and scoring.
- h. Applicants will receive an email acknowledging receipt of their Application. If an Applicant does not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting their Application, please contact: [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).

#### **4.2 How to Contact DHS about this RFQ and RFQ Communications**

- a. If you have any questions about this RFQ, please use the Vendor Discussion feature through the DHS Bonfire Portal at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> on the RFQ Opportunity Page, or email us at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).
  - o All content-related questions must be emailed by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on ten days before the submission deadline.
  - o You may submit technical or logistical questions at any time, even after the Questions Deadline.
- b. All information about the RFQ, including answers to all content-related questions and any changes or amendments, will be posted on the Bonfire RFQ Opportunity Page and on our Active Solicitations webpage at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations). Through the DHS Bonfire Portal, once you have created an account and indicated you are interested in this RFQ, you will receive automatic email updates when any questions, changes or amendments are made available.
  - o Please check our website and the DHS Bonfire Portal regularly for answers to questions, additional information and changes to the RFQ or the RFQ process.
  - o The website will be updated only on Thursdays, with any new information visible after 6 p.m.

#### **4.3 New Provider Requirements**

Applicants who do not have current Allegheny County DHS contract must submit the DHS New Provider Application and its supporting documents upon Notice of Intent to Qualify. Applicants are not required to submit this documentation with their Application.

- a. The DHS New Provider Application is available at our Active Solicitations website under the “Required documents” bar at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- b. The DHS New Provider Application asks for audited financial reports for the last three years. If an Applicant does not have audited financial reports for the last three years, then the Applicant may submit other financial documentation that attest to the Applicant’s financial health of your organization. Tax returns are the preferred alternative. Please note that providing adequate financial documentation is a requirement of contracting through Allegheny County.

#### **4.4 Other Information**

- a. **The issuance of this RFQ does not obligate the County to qualify and enter into an Agreement with any Applicants. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Applications.**
- b. Any Agreement originating from this RFQ is subject to all of the Terms and Conditions specified in Section 6: Contract Requirements for Qualified Applicants.
- c. Applicants are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of an Application.
- d. Applications become the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement between the Applicant and the County.

#### **4.5 Pennsylvania’s Right-to-Know Law**

Applicants should be aware that all documents and materials submitted in response to this RFQ may be subject to requests for access to public records made pursuant to Pennsylvania’s Right-To-Know Law (RTKL). Under the RTKL, records in the possession of a public agency like the County are presumed to be public records and the County may have to make documents and materials submitted by the Applicant available to a requestor after an award of an Agreement is made.

If the Applicant includes any information within its Application that the Applicant asserts is either a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information,” as those terms are defined under the RTKL, the Applicant must include with its Application a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Applicant identifying those portions or parts of its Application that the Applicant believes constitute a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information” and provide contact information to enable DHS to contact the Applicant in the event that the County receives a Right-To-Know request for the Application. The Applicant shall have five (5) business days from date of receipt of any notification from the County to provide a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Applicant explaining why the Application or any portion thereof is exempt from disclosure as a trade secret, confidential proprietary information or other legal reason. The County shall consider this statement in either granting or denying a request for public access to the Application or any portion thereof. The County will notify the Applicant of its decision whether to grant or deny the request either in whole or in part.

## **Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Application**

Applications will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee convened by DHS. The Evaluation Committee will assign scores based on the evaluation criteria in Section 3: Application Requirements and Evaluation Criteria using the scale listed in Section 5.1 b.

### **5.1 Evaluation Model**

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. DHS will form an Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee may consist of DHS and Court employees as well as subject matter representatives from external organizations.
- b. All Evaluation Committee members will individually review and score each Application. Each Evaluation Committee member will award points for each response on an Applicant's Response Form according to their expertise and best judgment of how the Application submitted by that Applicant meets the evaluation criteria in Section 3 using the following scale:
  - 0 – Not addressed in Application
  - 1 – Poor
  - 2 – Below expectations
  - 3 – Meets expectations
  - 4 – Exceeds expectations
  - 5 – Outstanding
- c. Each 0-5 score will be multiplied by the appropriate weight for the number of possible points noted after each evaluation criterion in Section 3. For example, for a criterion worth 15 points, the 0-5 score would be multiplied by three. An "Outstanding" response would receive 15 points, while one that "Meets Expectations" would receive nine points.
- d. DHS will tally the average scores of the members of the Evaluation Committee and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the average scores, and arrive at a consensus on which Applicant(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFQ.
- e. DHS, on behalf of the County, will conduct a formal interview with the Applicant(s) recommended for qualification with the Evaluation Committee before a recommendation is finalized. Each Committee member will individually score the interview using the following criteria and the scale outlined in 5.1b. The maximum score that a shortlisted Applicant's interview can receive is 15 points:
  - Interview demonstrates Applicant's ability to effectively conduct Forensic Evaluations as described in the RFQ (5 points)
  - Applicant's answers to Evaluation Committee's questions are appropriate (5 points)
  - Applicant's interview is thoughtful and professional (5 points)
- f. DHS will tally the average scores of the Evaluation Committee and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the scores, and arrive at a consensus on which Applicant(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFQ.
- g. At any time during the evaluation process, DHS may contact an Applicant to discuss any areas of the Application needing clarification or further explanation.
- h. The Committee will submit its recommendation for qualification to the Director of DHS for approval for Dependency and Delinquency Cases. The Committee will submit its recommendation for qualification to the Administrative Judge of the Court for approval for Custody Cases. The Director and/or Administrative Judge will in turn submit a request to the County Manager for approval for the County to enter into an Agreement(s) with the Qualified Applicant(s).

- a. For Dependency and Delinquency cases, the Agreement is under the purview of DHS. Therefore, the recommendation of qualification for Dependency and Delinquency cases goes to the Director of DHS for approval.
- b. For Custody cases, the Agreement is under the purview of the Court. Therefore, the recommendation of qualification for Custody cases goes to the Administrative Judge of the Court.
- i. As part of determining Applicants' eligibility to enter into a contract with Allegheny County, Group Practice Applicants' financial audits or other documentation will be reviewed by DHS fiscal analysts to ensure Applicants' financial stability.
- j. The County is under no obligation to award or enter into an Agreement with an Applicant as a result of this RFQ. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Applications.**
- k. All Applicants will be notified of the County's final decision of which Applicant(s) will be qualified.
- l. Applicants not qualified who are interested in receiving feedback regarding their submission may request a phone call at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).

## 5.2 Other Requirements

For an Application to be eligible for evaluation, it must be:

- a. Received by the due date/time
- b. Properly formatted and include responses to all requested information
- c. Complete with all required forms and attachments

Applications which do not meet the above requirements will be automatically rejected and will not be presented to the Evaluation Committee.

## Section 6: What Happens after an Applicant is Qualified

Qualification is not a guarantee of selection for specific referrals. A Qualified Applicant may or may not be selected for any referrals. After qualification by DHS, Qualified Applicants may be selected on an as-needed basis and will be required to enter into an Agreement(s) with Allegheny County, on behalf of DHS and/or the Court, under which services will be purchased and reimbursed. See Section 2.6 for more information about the referral process.

## Section 7: Contract Requirements for Qualified Applicants

In order to enter into an Agreement with the County, Applicants must be willing to comply with all contract requirements listed below and all standard terms and conditions contained in a

County contract for provision of services to DHS and its offices and the Court. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County are provided in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).

## **7.1 HIPAA Compliance**

DHS is a covered entity under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, a Qualified Applicant must comply with all HIPAA requirements.

## **7.2 Cyber Security**

- a. Qualified Applicants must meet the minimum computer specifications which begin on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- b. All electronic devices must have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of an information breach.
- c. Qualified Applicants must also have policies in place to ensure that electronic devices are physically secure when not in use (e.g., locked in a vehicle trunk, password protected).

## **7.3 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Requirements**

By submitting an Application, an Applicant agrees to not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, client or any other person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, age (40 or over), or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.

## **7.4 Language Diversity Requirements**

Successful Proposer(s) must assure resources are secured and/or made available for participants/consumers/clients with limited English proficiency or other communication barriers. Such actions shall include but not be limited to assessing the need for interpreters, evaluating the need for alternate language materials, identifying internal and external resources to meet identified needs, and accessing services contracted by DHS through their assigned contract monitor(s).