Request for Response (RFR)

RFR Title: DCF Parenting Capacity Evaluation

RFR Number: DCF PCE22

July 30, 2021

Brief Description: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) seeks proposals from Bidders qualified to conduct culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations. Approved Bidders will form a pool of provider resources across the Commonwealth available to conduct parenting capacity evaluations in response to referrals submitted by one of DCF's 29 Area Offices.

Parenting capacity evaluations address the fit between a youth's developmental needs and the ability of the youth's parent to meet those needs in a manner that will provide the youth with sufficient care and protection to prevent abuse or neglect.

Table of Contents

Key Terms and Definitions....4
Section 1: Purpose of Procurement and Background Description....6
Section 2: Performance and Contract Specifications....7
2.1 DCF Mission....7
2.2 RFR Goals and Objectives....7
2.3 Bidder Requirements....8
2.4 Service to Area Offices....11
2.5 Technology-Aided Communication....11
2.6 Eligible Population....12
2.7 Service Authorization and Referral Process....12
2.8 Cultural Competence....13
2.9 Evaluation Services....14
2.10 Partnership with the Department....19
Section 3: RFR General Description Information....20
3.1 Issuing Entity, RFR Distribution and Contact Information....20
3.2 World Trade Organization (WTO) Government Procurement Agreement....20
3.3 Regulations Governing Procurement....20
3.4 COMMBUYS Market Center....20
3.5 Acquisition Method....22
3.6 Single or Multiple Contractors....22
3.7 Single or Multiple Departments....22
3.8 Anticipated Duration of Contract Including Renewal Options....22
3.9 Calendar Rule Type....22
3.10 Amendment, Withdrawal, Cancellation or Re-Opening of RFR....22
3.11 Anticipated Expenditures, Funding or Compensation for Expected Duration....22
3.12 Procurement Calendar....23
3.13 Bidders' Conference....23
3.14 Written Inquires....24
3.15 Prohibited Communications....24
Section 4: Fiscal Specifications....24
4.1 Referrals for Services....24
4.2 Unit Rates....24
4.3 Payment and Fiscal Reporting Requirements....25
4.4 Invoice and Payment Specifications....25
4.5 Start-Up Costs....26
4.6 Contract Expansion....26
4.7 Costs....26
4.8 Contractual Status of Orders and Service Contracts....26
4.9 Reservation of Rights....26
Section 5: Service Specifications....27
5.1 Information Technology and Virtual Gateway Requirements....27
5.2 Secure Records....29
5.3 RFR Forms....29
5.4 Geographic Service and Delivery Areas....29
5.5 Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan....30
5.6 Agencies' Reports and Applicable Statutes, Regulations, and Policies/Procedures....33
Section 6: Response Requirements....33
6.1 Response Submission Requirements....33
6.2 Submission Deadline....33
6.3 Right to Modify Deadline....33
6.4 Submission Location....33
6.5 Electronic Proposal Submission Format....34
6.6 Page Limits and Attachments....34

6.7 Bidder's Response....34
6.8 Style of the Response Packages....35
6.9 Alterations....35
6.10 Ownership of Submitted Responses....35
6.11 Electronic Signatures....35
6.12 Ink Signatures....35
6.13 Multiple Responses....35
6.14 Response Content....36
6.15 Minimum Response Duration....36
Section 7: Review Process....36
7.1 Compliance with Submission Requirement....36
7.2 Review Team....36
7.3 Preliminary Reviews....36
7.4 Oral Presentations....36
7.5 Clarifications....37
7.6 Evaluating and Rating....37
7.7 Information Subject to Review....37
7.8 Recommendation for Selection....38
7.9 Best Value....38
7.10 Selection Decisions....38
7.11 Selection Decision and Notification....38
7.12 Contract Negotiations....38
7.13 Announcement....39
Section 8: Business Specifications....39
8.1 Audit....39
8.2 CORI Checks....39
8.3 Debarment....40
8.4 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)....40
8.5 HIPAA: Business Associate Contractual Obligations....41
8.6 Notice about Method of Payment....41
8.7 Public Records....41
8.8 Reasonable Accommodation....41
8.9 Reporting....42
8.10 Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal....42
8.11 Subcontracting Policies....42
8.12 Supplier Diversity Program Subcontracting Policies....42
Section 9: Contracting Policies....42
9.1 Mandatory Contract Forms....42
9.2 Contractor's Contact Information....43
9.3 Transition Agreement....43
9.4 Publicity....43
Section 10: Applicable Statutes, Regulations, and Policies/Procedures....44

Key Terms and Definitions

Bidder.	An organization that submits a proposal to the Department to provide human or social services in response to this RFR.
Child/Children.	When used in connection with a parent, or other adult serving the role of a parent, the term "child" applies regardless of the age of the offspring. That is, in the phrases "the mother's child" or "increasing parental capacity to care for their child," the term "child" may refer to youth of any age.
Contractor.	An organization that enters into a contract with the Department to provide human or social services in conjunction with the operation of programs as delineated in this RFR.
Cultural competence.	A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.
Family.	A term used inclusively in this RFR to describe not only biological or adoptive parents and siblings, but other individuals who are important to a youth, who can serve as lifelong connections for a youth, and who may care for a youth in their home. These individuals may be kin, foster, pre-adoptive family members, or other caring adults in a youth's life.
Linguistic competency.	The capacity to communicate effectively and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences, including persons with limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities, including sensory disabilities such as blindness or deafness
Minimal parenting.	A level of acceptable parenting that is sufficient to protect the safety and well-being of the youth, in contrast to an "optimal" or arbitrary standard, which may not acknowledge cultural differences in parenting practices.
Parent.	Any person fulfilling a caregiving role for a youth. For the sake of simplicity, the RFR uses the singular term "parent," but an evaluation may be conducted for multiple parents.
Parenting capacity.	Refers to the match between the unique needs of a specific youth and the parent's abilities to meet those needs on a consistent basis in a manner that will provide the youth with sufficient care and protection to prevent abuse or neglect.
Strength-based.	An approach based on identifying and building on an individual's or family's assets or abilities rather than focusing on deficits. The approach is based on the fundamental principle that all youth and families have strengths.

Trauma-Informed.	Refers to environments, services, and treatments based on knowledge of the impacts of trauma, effective responses to trauma, and commitments to promote healing from trauma and avoidance of re-traumatization.
Virtual Gateway.	An Internet portal operated by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services that allows the general public, medical providers, community-based organizations and state employees a centralized technology platform to find information and access health and human services including the Department's i-FamilyNet statewide child welfare information system.
Youth.	Used to refer collectively to children, adolescents, and young adults, who span a wide range of ages and developmental abilities.

Section 1: Purpose of Procurement and Background Description

The Department of Children and Families seeks culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations to inform decisions on core child welfare issues, which include safety and risk, placement of youth in out-of-home settings, permanency, and reunification.

Parenting capacity evaluations address the fit between a youth's developmental needs and the ability of the youth's parent to meet those needs in a manner that will provide the youth with sufficient care and protection to prevent abuse or neglect. Parenting capacity is about the match between the unique needs of a specific youth and the parent's abilities to meet those needs on a consistent basis. In families with multiple youth, each youth has a different set of developmental needs. Therefore, when a parenting capacity evaluation is requested for multiple youth in a family, the fit between a parent's abilities and a youth's needs will be assessed separately for each youth. The evaluation will also consider the collective needs of all youth included in the referral and the parent's capacity to meet those collective needs.

The Department will develop specific questions pertinent to each family case to frame the focus for each parenting capacity evaluation that is requested. Typically, the questions will address aspects of the following broad topic areas:

- The parent's ability to provide a youth with the safe care needed to prevent abuse or neglect;
- The developmental needs and psychological functioning of the youth, with particular attention to factors such as age, communication skills, sexual orientation or gender identity, or disability that affect a youth's vulnerability and level of capability for self-care;
- The parent's emotional well-being and resilience for managing stress in a manner that does not interrupt meeting a youth's parenting needs;
- Whether the parent has (or had) a disability, whether the disability impacts the parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment to a youth, and if so, what accommodations might be provided to the parent;
- The social and concrete supports available to the parent and youth;
- The emotional relationship between a parent and youth, including the level of attachment and affection parent and youth have for each other and the parent's ability to promote the youth's social growth and competence; and
- The need for and likelihood of success of treatments and interventions for any issues in which there is not a fit between a parent's abilities and a youth's needs and the lack of fit raises concerns regarding the adequacy of the parent's care and protection of the youth.

The families involved with DCF come from diverse heritages and experiences that have relevance for family norms and parenting. This diversity in background and experience encompasses race, culture, national origin, language, inclusive of American Sign Language (ASL), religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical or mental disability. The Department seeks Bidders qualified to conduct culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations informed by a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and attitudes that enable evaluators to work effectively in cross-cultural settings by understanding how diverse heritages and experiences influence family dynamics, parenting practices, child rearing expectations, and youth's behaviors.

Section 2: Performance and Contract Specifications

2.1 DCF Mission

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) works in partnership with families and communities to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the youth it serves. In most cases, DCF is able to provide supports and services to keep youth safe with parents or family members. When necessary, DCF provides foster care or finds new permanent families for youth through kinship, guardianship, or adoption.

2.2 RFR Goals and Objectives

DCF seeks proposals from Bidders qualified to conduct culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations. Approved Bidders will form a pool of provider resources across the Commonwealth available to conduct parenting capacity evaluations in response to referrals submitted by one of DCF's 29 Area Offices. DCF's 29 Area Offices are organized into five regions, which oversee the operations of the Area Offices:

Region	Area Offices
Boston	Harbor, Hyde Park, Jackson Square, Park Street
Central	North Central, South Central, Worcester East, Worcester West
Northern	Cambridge-Burlington, Framingham, Greater Lowell, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lynn, Metro North, Salem
Southern	Arlington, Barnstable, Brockton, Coastal, Fall River, New Bedford, Plymouth, Taunton
Western	Berkshire, Greenfield, Holyoke, Springfield, Van Wart

Evaluators will gather information that will allow them to respond to the specific questions that the Department develops for an individual case. Information required to conduct the evaluation will include topics such as, but not limited to, the family's race, culture, national origin, language, inclusive of American Sign Language (ASL), religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical or mental disability of a parent or youth that may require accommodations; DCF history; family history, including veteran status; relevant mental health diagnoses, including substance use, for a parent or youth; the nature and quality of the parent-youth relationship; evidence of trauma; intimate partner violence; physical health status; social and concrete supports available to the family; and the entire family context.

The deliverables that evaluators will provide to DCF include:

- The completion of a written report that summarizes the evaluation process; responds to the specific questions submitted by the Department to the evaluator; addresses the fit between a youth's developmental needs and the ability of the youth's parent to meet those needs in a manner that will provide the youth with sufficient care and protection to prevent abuse or neglect; and makes recommendations,

- Opportunity for DCF to discuss a written report with an evaluator to deepen understanding of the evaluation process as well as the findings and recommendations in the report,
- Participation of the evaluator in court proceedings, as requested by DCF, including testifying at a hearing or trial, and
- Participation of the evaluator in DCF clinical review teams and/or foster care reviews, as requested by DCF.

2.3 Bidder Requirements

2.3.1 Individual Practitioners or Organizations

Bidders may be individual practitioners (hereafter, "evaluators") or organizations that employ evaluators.

2.3.2 Professional Competence

The Department considers evaluators with the following licensures as qualified to conduct culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations:

- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers, pursuant to 258 CMR 12.00;
- Psychologists, pursuant to 251 CMR 3.00;
- Licensed Mental Health Counselors, pursuant to 262 CMR 2.00;
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, pursuant to 262 CMR 3.00; or
- Professionals pursuing one of the above-listed licensures under the supervision of a professional holding one of the above-listed licensures. In these situations, the final evaluation must be signed by both the evaluator and the supervising professional.

In addition to professional competence, evaluators must be prepared to demonstrate competence to serve the population of families involved with DCF, where abuse or neglect has, or is suspected to have, occurred.

These families may have one or more of the following types of lived experiences:

- A parent and/or a youth with disabilities
- Living in poverty
- Trauma, which may be intergenerational
- Mental and behavioral health concerns, including substance use
- Difficulty with engaging in services or mistrust of government agencies
- Intergenerational experience with DCF
- Intimate partner violence and other forms of family violence
- Experiences of discrimination, bias, and racial trauma

The questions that accompany each referral will differ based on the unique circumstances of the case. In addition to addressing the specific questions, evaluators will note any

additional issues that have relevance for a youth's safety and risk that may not have been addressed in the referral questions provided by DCF.

Evaluators will consider what specific competencies are required for each referral. For situations in which the evaluator possesses the needed competencies, they will conduct the evaluation independently. Otherwise, evaluators are expected to supplement the evaluation by consulting with one or more professionals who possess the necessary competencies. Initiation of, and arrangement for, such consultation is the responsibility of the evaluator because cultural competency is an expectation for parenting capacity evaluations.

Consultation may be needed regarding specialized knowledge of various factors that affect parenting, such as physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities, mental health, substance use disorders, and patterns of intimate partner violence. Consultation may also be needed to ensure competency regarding cultural norms for child-rearing, treating illnesses, and disciplining youth. In circumstances when consultation is needed, evaluators will be expected to partner with individuals or organizations (e.g., community-based organizations, faith-based and charitable organizations, tribal organizations, or voluntary associations) that have the professional and cultural competencies needed to supplement the competencies of the evaluator.

To ensure linguistic competence, evaluators will:

- Offer language assistance, including ASL and Communication Access Realtime Translation Service (CART) from certified providers to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them,
- Inform, verbally and in writing, all parents and youth of the availability of language assistance
- Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.
- Provide easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials in the languages commonly used by the parents and youth referred for evaluations.

If needed, DCF will assist with arranging and reimbursing interpreting services for low prevalence languages or dialects (i.e., used by less than .05% of the Massachusetts population) or for communication services that are difficult to secure, including ASL and CART certified providers.

The families involved with DCF come from diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic heritages, which have relevance for family norms and parenting practices. The data provided in Attachment A shows the racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the families served in DCF's 29 Area Offices. Bidders are expected to use this data to understand and be responsive to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the parents and youth for whom parenting capacity evaluations will be conducted.

2.3.3 Impartiality

The Department seeks culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations. Evaluators shall have no other relationship, either formal or informal, with the adults and youth for whom a parenting capacity evaluation is requested. If an evaluator has a personal or professional relationship with either the adults or youth in a referred case, the evaluator shall decline the referral. Instances in which an evaluator had a past professional relationship that terminated more than 12 months prior to receipt of a referral will be permitted when the evaluator's self-assessment determines that conducting the evaluation is aligned with the ethical guidelines of the evaluator's profession and when the evaluator meets the following conditions:

- The evaluator notifies the DCF referral source of the past professional relationship,
- The evaluator engages consultation from another professional with the competencies listed in Section 2.3.2 for the explicit purpose of discussing and reviewing both the process and final evaluation report with the evaluator to guard against unwarranted judgements and unintended biases based on the previous professional relationship, and
- Details of the past professional relationship and the strategies used to avoid bias as a result of that past relationship are described in the written report.

While conducting the evaluation or during the pendency of a legal matter in which the evaluation is considered, an evaluator shall not engage adult or youth examinees as clients for therapy or any other professional services, including services paid for by DCF.

If the evaluator is employed by an agency that provides therapy or other services for the youth or parent examinee, the agency must have and follow policies and procedures to ensure impartiality in communicating about the case. These policies and procedures must include expectations for the professional conducting a parenting capacity evaluation to communicate about the case with agency colleagues who are providing therapy or other services for the family in the same professional manner as communicating with collaterals employed by other agencies.

Evaluators will base findings and recommendations included in the evaluation report on an unbiased review of all available data and information, which will include evaluators' own observations of and interactions and interviews with parents and youth. Evaluators, based on their training, experience, and knowledge of research and professional literature, will use the generally accepted methods and procedures of their profession when conducting the evaluation and will disclose any limitations to the findings and recommendations.

In written reports, discussions with staff at DCF, and court testimony, evaluators are expected to distinguish and clarify the differences among the data and information reviewed to inform an evaluation, inferences, and recommendations. The evaluator must provide the underlying reasoning for summary conclusions and recommendations.

To remain impartial, evaluators shall not adopt a stance of advocacy regarding an individual case or regarding characteristics of the broader child welfare or legal system within which they work.

2.4 Service to Area Offices

The RFR is released on a statewide basis. However, in their responses, Bidders must indicate which Regions they are able to serve, opting out of certain Area Offices if needed. DCF may negotiate defined geographic service areas with Bidders, especially when the Bidder offers unique specialized expertise that may be needed in multiple geographic locations across the Commonwealth.

The Bidder must provide services within the contracted service delivery area selected when properly authorized and as requested by DCF. For a full list of Massachusetts towns and their corresponding catchments and DCF Area Offices, please see Attachment B.

Evaluators' service hours must be flexible and include afternoon, evening, and weekend hours to accommodate working parents and must accommodate school-age youth by scheduling interviews and observations at times that do not interfere with school attendance and participation in school activities. Preferably, interviews and observations with school-age youth will be conducted outside of school hours. The evaluator must conduct interviews and observations in the most natural, least restrictive settings possible, such as homes or community settings, so that information collected accurately represents family functioning. Locations for interviews and observations must be locations convenient for parents and youth. Observations and interviews shall not be conducted in a youth's out-of-home placement or in a therapeutic setting where the parent and youth are receiving therapy.

2.5 Technology-Aided Communication

Use of technology-aided communication (e.g., telephone, video conferencing) rather than in-person communication is reasonable and permitted when the evaluator is interacting with:

- Consultants,
- Collaterals (e.g., the provider of a specific service to the family), and
- DCF staff (e.g., the referrer or service team, when further discussion is needed).

Evaluators must interact with parents and youth in the same physical location, unless the referral from DCF indicates that use of technology-aided communication is reasonable and permitted. Reasonable circumstances may include accommodating:

- A family's cultural or linguistic needs,
- A family's scheduling needs,
- A family's access to transportation,
- A parent's or youth's disability, or
- Other specialized circumstances identified by DCF.

In all instances in which video conferencing is allowed rather than in-person communications, the audio/visual fidelity, clarity, and field of view of the video conferencing must be functionally equivalent to an interaction in which participants are in

the same physical location. In all instances in which video conferencing is allowed rather than in-person communications, the evaluator will ensure access for parents and youth to technology for participating in video conferencing.

If the evaluator would like to propose technology-aided communication rather than in-person communications with either a parent or youth, the evaluator must receive approval from the DCF referral source for each unique occurrence when technology-aided communication is proposed to be used instead of in-person communication.

2.6 Eligible Population

Referrals will be for parents and youth being served by DCF on an open case.

2.7 Service Authorization and Referral Process

The provider will receive referrals from DCF Area Offices, which will include relevant history and the questions being asked, which will focus on the protective concerns of the case and the individual needs of both the youth and parents. Referrals for parenting capacity evaluations may occur at any point in the life of a case, when youth are living with parents, when youth are in out-of-home placements, or when there is planning for reunification. DCF will provide the referral questions prior to the evaluator initiating the evaluation process. Background information, including, if known, whether any family member will require an accommodation as a result of a disability, will be shared through a variety of documents, which may include a Family Assessment and Action Plan (FAAP), prior reports, or assessments. Information will be shared pursuant to applicable statute and regulations governing confidentiality and privilege.

The evaluator must respond to case-specific questions and follow any case-specific instructions provided in the referral documents. Should the evaluator have a concern or disagreement about the case-specific questions or instructions, the evaluator will, within three (3) business days of receipt of the referral, notify the DCF referral source of the concern or disagreement. At DCF's discretion, DCF may convene a resolution meeting, which will include the DCF Clinical Team (e.g., social worker, supervisor, area program manager, area clinical manager).

2.7.1 Initiating and Completing Services

- The provider must communicate acceptance or non-acceptance of the referral within three (3) business days of receipt of the referral.
- The provider must make contact with the family within seven (7) calendar days of acceptance of the referral.
- If the evaluator is unable to meet the timelines in A or B above for any reason, the evaluator must:
    - Communicate this to the DCF referral source.
    - Document each contact attempt, including the method of contact used.
    - Contact the DCF referral source requesting alternate family contact information and document this request.

DCF will determine whether the referral should be sent to a different provider.

- The evaluation report must be submitted no later than 35 calendar days from receipt of referral. If, due to the number of youth in the family, or the complexity of the family's circumstances, the evaluation cannot be completed within that number of days, the provider shall request an extension from the DCF referral source.
- If an evaluation is needed immediately, the provider must work with DCF to expedite service delivery whenever possible, at no additional cost to DCF.

2.8 Cultural Competence

Evaluations shall be culturally competent, which means that the parenting capacity evaluations will be informed by a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and attitudes that enable evaluators to work effectively in cross-cultural settings by understanding how diverse heritages and experiences influence family dynamics, parenting practices, child rearing expectations, and youth's behaviors. The term "culturally competent" is inclusive, spanning race, culture, national origin, language, inclusive of American Sign Language (ASL), religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity; physical or mental disability; and, family history, including veteran status.

If evaluators lack the necessary expertise to conduct a culturally competent evaluation, evaluators shall consult with professionals who possess the necessary competencies.

Cultural competency includes:

- A thorough understanding of a parent's and youth's cultures, including traditions and societal norms within their community;
- An understanding of the impact of oppression on the lives of populations served;
- Adequate oral or written communication capacity to serve the needs of the parent and youth, including meeting the communication needs of individuals from the deaf and hard of hearing community and individuals who are blind or have vision loss; and
- An understanding of the full range of sexual orientations and gender identifications currently summarized as LGBTQ+.

The provider must conduct all services with sensitivity to the following areas, including, but not limited to:

- Race
- Culture
- National Origin
- Language, inclusive of American Sign Language (ASL)
- Religion
- Age
- Sexual orientation and gender identification
- Physical or mental disability and developmental needs
- Family history, including veteran status
- Medical/Psychiatric History and Functioning
- Level of Education

Providers must fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under these laws, providers must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless doing so would provide undue hardship. Should the provision of accommodations create undue hardship for an evaluator, the evaluator must communicate the hardship to DCF. DCF will either arrange for accommodations itself or transfer the referral to an evaluator who can make the accommodations.

2.9 Evaluation Services

The following sections describe the process for conducting a parenting capacity evaluation.

2.9.1 Participant Orientation to Services

Evaluators shall orient the parent and youth, as age and developmentally appropriate, both verbally and in writing to the evaluation process, the importance of the evaluation, how the evaluation will be used, and reasons for participating in the evaluation process. Written materials must be translated, adapted, and/or provided in alternative formats based on the needs and preferences of the populations served. To orient participants effectively, evaluators must be skilled in engaging in collaborative, person-centered communications.

Use of parenting capacity evaluations to assist with core decision-making in child protection is a foundational practice in child welfare. Therefore, evaluators' orientation shall communicate the commonness of parenting capacity evaluations so that parents and youth understand they are not being singled out for an unusual process. Evaluators shall avoid use of any threatening or coercive language regarding requirements for participating in a parenting capacity evaluation.

The evaluator shall provide the participant with an informational packet in the participant's primary or preferred language consisting of the following information. DCF will provide a standard packet of information, which the evaluator shall customize for each specific case. The standard packet will include:

- Description of parenting capacity evaluation process, including the nature and purpose of the evaluation, the nature of the relationship between the evaluator and DCF, the requirement for the evaluation to be impartial, and any other material facts regarding the evaluation process and reporting;
- Participant's rights, informed consent and assent, limits of confidentiality and privacy protections, which include that any communication is not privileged and may be used in court proceedings;
- Description of the evaluator's mandated reporter responsibilities; and
- Participation is voluntary and may be terminated at any time.

The evaluator must customize the standard information packet by adding the following:

- Description of the case-specific referral questions provided by DCF that will be covered in the evaluation, and
- Provider's hours of operation, contact person, and contact information.

2.9.2 Description of the Evaluation

Parenting capacity evaluations focus on parenting abilities and the parent-youth fit rather than on the parent's cognitive or personality functioning in general. DCF referral questions will focus on the protective concerns of the case and the individual needs of both the youth and parents.

In families with multiple youth, each youth has a different set of developmental needs. Therefore, when a parenting capacity evaluation is requested for multiple youth in a family, the fit between a parent's abilities and a youth's needs will be assessed separately for each youth. The evaluation will also consider the collective needs of all youth included in the referral and the parent's capacity to meet those collective needs.

2.9.2.1 Methods of Data Gathering

Evaluators shall use multiple methods of data gathering, which may include but not be limited to record reviews, interviews, observations, and discussions with collateral sources. Evaluators are expected to observe the youth together with the parent in natural settings, such as homes or community settings familiar to the youth and parent. Any barriers to conducting an observation of the youth and parent in a natural setting that the evaluator cannot overcome shall be communicated to the DCF referral source. In rare instances, DCF may be able to assist with arranging an in-person observation in a natural setting or waive the requirement that the observation must occur in a natural setting and allow observation in a DCF Area Office.

The written report from the evaluator will detail all methods of data gathering used to conduct the parenting capacity evaluation.

2.9.2.2 Evaluation Report: Content

Evaluators must:

- Include the parent's own understanding of the reason for the evaluation and share the parent's own words that describe their understanding, as distinct from the evaluator's interpretation of the parent's understanding.
- Respond to DCF's referral questions, which will focus on the protective concerns of the case and the individual needs of both the youth and parents.
- Describe the behavior and skills in everyday performance that illustrate what the parent understands, believes, knows, does, and is able to do with regard to the specific questions that DCF will provide.
- Look for and document evidence of minimal parenting standards in the parent-youth relationship(s) referenced in the referral, taking the family's cultural norms into account rather than comparing the parent to "optimal" or arbitrary standards. This means accepting that parenting practices differ among cultural, ethnic, and economic groups and respecting such differences in culture, practice, and access to resources.

    - Assess and document the emotional relationship between a parent and youth, including the level of attachment and affection the parent and youth have for each other
    - Identify and document contextual factors, including but not limited to, the family's neighborhood, social network, concrete resources, formal and informal supports, and trauma history.
- Describe the parent's current strengths as well as weaknesses as they relate to the fit between the parent's skills and abilities and the youth's needs, which include, but are not limited to, medical, physical, educational, psychological, emotional, developmental, and social needs. Assessments of psychological, emotional, or cognitive functioning are not designed or validated to assess parenting skills. Assessments of a parent's psychological, emotional, or cognitive functioning may inform the parenting capacity evaluation, but are not the purpose of, and shall not be substituted for, the parenting capacity evaluation.
- Look for and document convergence and lack of convergence among the different data sources (e.g., referral information, parent interviews, collateral interviews, youth interviews, observations of parent and youth) to create a fair representation of the parent's skills and abilities to meet a youth's needs for care and protection.
- Suggest potential services, treatments, or interventions to address any lack of fit between a parent's skills and abilities and a youth's needs, especially the youth's need for safety and protection.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations using standard professional methods to evaluate and synthesize the information gathered and clearly identify the inferences upon which the evaluator is basing those conclusions and recommendations.
- Avoid making specific determinations and recommendations about questions that are the domain of the Department or the court, such as the determination of whether abuse or neglect has occurred or the determination of whether DCF should seek custody. Instead, the evaluation should offer behavioral descriptions, possible explanations, and directions for interventions that will improve parenting capacity.
- Make note of any additional issues that have relevance for a youth's safety and risk that may not have been addressed in the referral questions provided by DCF.

2.9.2.3 Evaluation Report: Administrative Requirements

- Respond to all questions in the referral received from DCF.
- Compose the evaluation at no higher than an eighth-grade reading level, with all acronyms defined.
- Provide a chronology of assessment activities, including the dates of activities, the full names of participants in observations and interviews, and the locations of observations and interviews.

- Provide the names of any psychological tests or assessments administered and the rationale for their use.
- Include only those diagnostic terms that have relevance for describing a parent's skills and abilities to meet the youth's needs. If diagnostic terms are included, explain what they mean in lay terms and in a manner that respects the dignity of the individuals with the diagnosis, the basis for the diagnosis, and how the diagnostic condition is relevant to parenting.
- Provide the full name, professional title, degree, discipline, and licensure status of all participating evaluators, consultants, and supervisors.
- Submit reports to the DCF referral source within the agreed-upon timeframe. No other copies of the report shall be distributed without DCF consent. Reports should be submitted electronically in PDF format. Electronic submission must use a secure file transfer process provided by or approved by DCF. Upon request from DCF, the evaluation will be submitted physically in hard copy. Use of a "delivery receipt" through email or physical delivery confirmation is recommended.

2.9.3 Sample Outline of a Parenting Capacity Evaluation

The questions that accompany each referral will differ based on the unique circumstances of the case. The following outline is an example of the sections that DCF will expect in each parenting capacity evaluation report. Additional sections may be included by the evaluator if relevant for providing a thorough evaluation of parenting capacity. Evaluation reports must comply with the requirements in **Sections 2.9.2.2** and **2.9.2.3**.

I. Identifying information
   a. List identifying information for all participants, collaterals, and professionals involved in the evaluation
      i. Examples of identifiers: persons evaluated (including names, birthdates, and ages),
      ii. Provide the full name, professional title, degree, discipline, and licensure status of all participating evaluators, consultants, and supervisors. Include those who supplemented evaluators' expertise in areas such as cultural competence, intimate partner violence, substance abuse, disabilities, and other factors specific to the family.
   b. List referral source, date of referral, and date of report
II. Reason for referral
   a. Include the specific clinical questions to be answered, which will focus on the protective concerns of the case and the individual needs of both the youth and parents.
   b. Include the parent's own understanding of the reason for the evaluation. Document the parent's actual words, not the evaluator's interpretation of the parent's understanding.
III. Summary of activities and records reviewed
   a. Chronologically list activities (including date, type of activity, full names of persons involved, and locations)

i. Examples of activities (e.g., interviews with family members and collateral sources, observations, record reviews, and assessments)

b. List relevant records reviewed

IV. Summary of relevant information obtained

a. Describe relevant information from all activities and records reviewed, citing sources to clarify what information came from what source, noting discrepancies or consistencies across sources

b. Identify contextual factors including, but not limited to, the family's neighborhood, social network, concrete resources, formal and informal supports, and trauma history likely to influence parenting capacity.

c. Look for convergence and lack of convergence among the different data sources (e.g., referral information, parent interviews, collateral interviews, youth interviews, observations of parent and youth) to create a fair representation of the parent's skills and abilities to meet a youth's needs for care and protection.

V. Describe any limitations in the evaluation, which may include the parent's comprehension of questions, time limits, cultural or language differences, gaps in evaluation activities, or parent or youth illness during evaluation

VI. Psychological, emotional, or cognitive assessment administered [This section not required if no assessments were administered.]

a. List each psychological, emotional, or cognitive assessment (full name) used, if any

i. Summarize results of psychological, emotional, or cognitive assessments by describing the assessments' relevance for parenting capacity, respecting that a single psychological, emotional, or cognitive assessment is not a validated source for determining parenting capacity.

ii. State whether findings from individual assessments are valid, evaluator's basis for the judgment, and implications for interpreting the relevance to parenting capacity

VII. Warning of limits on confidentiality

a. Indicate that the parent has been notified regarding the limits on confidentiality of the evaluation and any information gathered during the course of the evaluation and has provided their informed consent

b. Describe the parent's understanding of the notice regarding limits on confidentiality and how the evaluator determined the parent's comprehension of the notice

c. Indicate that collateral sources have been notified that the evaluation will be shared with DCF and other relevant parties, which may include courts, as determined by DCF.

VIII. Response to DCF's referral questions

a. For each referral question, describe the information used to develop a response to the question, the evaluator's interpretation of the information, and the information's relevance for describing and understanding parent-youth fit.

b. Describe the parent's parenting strengths and protective capacities as well as deficits and risks as they bear on the referral questions and the parent-youth fit for each youth included in the referral questions.

c. Avoid making specific determinations and recommendations about questions that are the domain of the Department or the court (i.e., whether a parent's rights should be terminated or if a parent should be granted unsupervised visits), but instead provide factual, behaviorally specific, and logical information that informs understanding of parent-youth fit.
d. Make note of any additional issues that may have relevance for a youth's future safety and risk that were not included in the referral questions provided by DCF.[1] This may include the emotional relationship between a parent and youth, including the level of attachment and affection the parent and youth have for each other, if not addressed in the DCF referral questions.

IX. Summary of recommendations
a. Suggest potential services, treatments, or interventions to improve, as needed, the fit between a parent's skills and abilities and a youth's needs
b. Link the recommendations to the family's unique strengths and needs as described in the responses to DCF referral questions.
c. Avoid making recommendations on topics unrelated to the referral questions unless related to issues that may influence a youth's future safety and risk that were not included in the referral questions

X. Signature
a. Provide full name, professional degree, license number, and signature of evaluator (and supervisor, if any)

2.10 Partnership with the Department

The contractual relationship between the Department and individuals or organizations selected to deliver culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations requires Contractors to deliver evaluations consistent with the specifications in this RFR. The Department may conduct contract management reviews and/or provide technical assistance to support Contractors in fulfilling the RFR specifications. Insights from contract monitoring may be used to amend contract requirements in ways that will improve the quality of parenting capacity evaluations.

Within the contractual relationship, the Department seeks to partner with Contractors in a manner that prioritizes obtaining high quality, impartial, culturally and linguistically competent parenting capacity evaluations to inform core child welfare decisions. Reports may be reasonably requested by DCF on a regular or ad hoc basis pursuant to its obligation to monitor and evaluate purchased services.

2.10.1 Contract Management

Contractors shall participate in any contract management processes, which may include, but not be limited to, responding to feedback regarding:

- Comparisons of evaluation reports to the specifications in this RFR;

[1] As licensed human service professionals who are mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect, evaluators are required to follow Massachusetts General Law (MGL c.119, § 51A) on the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect.

- The timeliness of responding to referrals and submitting evaluation reports;
- Policies and procedures that ensure impartiality in communicating about the case when the agency also provides therapy or other services for the youth or parent examinee.

Section 3: RFR General Description Information

Issuing Entity	Department of Children and Families
RFR Title	DCF Parenting Capacity Evaluation
RFR Number	DCF PCE22
Procurement Category	Community and Social Services
UNSPSC Code	93-14-00
Contact Person	Katherine Canada
Email	ServicesNetwork@mass.gov
Address	Department of Children and Families 600 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111

2.12 World Trade Organization (WTO) Government Procurement Agreement

This procurement is subject to the World Trade Organization Government Procurement Agreement, established January 1, 1996, to encourage worldwide trade by ensuring fairness, non-discrimination, and equal treatment of laws, regulations and procedures in the government process. In compliance with the advertising requirement of this agreement, the actual RFR documents for this procurement are being posted on COMMBUYS for at least 40 days prior to the Bid Opening Date (also known as Response Due Date).

2.13 Regulations Governing Procurement

The terms of 801 CMR 21.00: Procurement of Commodities or Services Including Human and Social Services and 808 CMR 1.00: Compliance, Reporting and Auditing for Human and Social Services are incorporated by reference into this RFR. Words used in this RFR shall have the meanings defined in 801 CMR 21.00 and in 808 CMR 1.00. All communications, responses, and documentation must be in English and all cost figures in U.S. currency. All responses must be submitted in accordance with the specific terms of this RFR. In addition, this RFR incorporates relevant provisions of the current Operational Services Division Required Specifications. Any updates or amendments to these Specifications during the life of this procurement are also incorporated.

2.14 COMMBUYS Market Center

COMMBUYS Market Center. COMMBUYS is the official source of information for this Bid and is publicly accessible at no charge at www.commbuys.com. Information contained in this document and in COMMBUYS, including file attachments and information contained in the related Bid Questions and Answers (Q&A), are all components of the Bid, as referenced in COMMBUYS, and are incorporated into the Bid and any resulting contract.

Bidders are solely responsible for obtaining all information distributed for this Bid via COMMBUYS. Bid Q&A supports Bidder submission of written questions associated with a Bid and publication of official answers.

It is each Bidder's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for:

- Any amendments, addenda, or modifications to this Bid, and
- Any Bid Q&A records related to this Bid.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility and will provide no accommodation to Bidders who submit a Quote based on an out-of-date Bid or on information received from a source other than COMMBUYS.

COMMBUYS Registration. To respond to a Bid, Bidders must register and maintain an active COMMBUYS Seller account. Bidders may elect to obtain a free COMMBUYS Seller registration which provides value-added features, including automated email notification associated with postings and modifications to COMMBUYS records.

All Bidders submitting a Quote (previously referred to as Response) in response to this Bid (previously referred to as Solicitation) agree that, if awarded a contract: (1) they will maintain an active seller account in COMMBUYS; and (2) in the event the Commonwealth adopts an alternate market center system, successful Bidders will be required to utilize such system, as directed by the procuring entity. Commonwealth Commodity Codes are based on the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code (UNSPSC).

COMMBUYS introduces new terminology, with which Bidders must be familiar to conduct business with the Commonwealth. To view this terminology and to learn more about COMMBUYS, please visit the COMMBUYS Resources page on mass.gov: https://www.mass.gov/learn-about-commbuys-resources

COMMBUYS Support. Technical assistance is available during the procurement process. Every effort is made to respond to inquiries within one business day.

Website: Go to www.mass.gov/osd/commbuys and select the appropriate link, or visit www.commbuys.com

Email: Send inquiries to the Operational Services Division (OSD) & COMMBUYS Helpdesk at OSDHELPDESK@MASS.GOV **Telephone:** Call the OSD Help Desk at 1-888-MA-STATE (1-888-627-8283) or at 1-617-720-3197. The Help Desk is staffed from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday Eastern Standard or Daylight time, as applicable, except on federal and state holidays.

Bidders are advised that COMMBUYS will be unavailable during regularly scheduled maintenance hours of which all users will be notified.

2.15 Acquisition Method

Any contract that is awarded is fee-for-service. Payment will be made on a **Unit Rate** basis. This is NOT a maximum obligation contract.

2.16 Single or Multiple Contractors

The Department will be looking for multiple qualified Bidders for this service.

2.17 Single or Multiple Departments

Only the Department of Children and Families will contract for and purchase services under this RFR.

2.18 Anticipated Duration of Contract Including Renewal Options

The initial term of this Contract is up to six years. In addition, this Contract has one option to renew for an additional three years. The total duration, including the initial term and renewal options is up to nine years. This contract will terminate no later than December 31, 2030. DCF reserves the right to make awards for a shorter duration when it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth.

2.19 Calendar Rule Type

Rolling Enrollment Procurement: Bidders may apply until June 30, 2030. The Department will be accepting additional bids after the initial contract award. All Bidders submitting a response after September 10, 2021 must use the email in **Section 3.1** to notify DCF of an intention to submit a proposal and see **Section 6.2** for information about rolling deadlines. DCF reserves the right to close the RFR at an earlier date if the need for parenting capacity evaluations is met prior to June 30, 2030.

2.20 Amendment, Withdrawal, Cancellation or Re-Opening of RFR

DCF reserves the right to amend, withdraw, cancel or re-open this RFR. Notice of any of these actions will be posted on COMMBUYS. DCF additionally reserve the right, at their sole discretion, to amend the Contract to implement state or federal statutory or regulatory requirements, judicial orders, settlement agreements, or any state or federal initiatives or changes affecting DCF, or the Contract.

2.21 Anticipated Expenditures, Funding or Compensation for Expected Duration

The total estimated expenditures for this procurement over the potential duration of the contract (up to twelve years with the renewals) is anticipated to be approximately $9.2 million.

Federal funds MAY be used to fund part or all of the Contracts resulting from this RFR.

All Contracts awarded under this RFR and all amendments and renewals are subject to appropriations, performance of the Contractor on an ongoing basis, and the needs of the DCF.

2.22 Procurement Calendar

The following represents best estimates of the timetables that will be followed for this procurement. All times in the RFR and the Procurement Calendar are Eastern Standard/Daylight Savings times, as applicable.

RFR posted on COMMBUYS: Friday, July 30, 2021
Bidders' Conference: Friday, August 6, 2021
Written Inquiries Due Date: Friday, August 13, 2021
Questions and Answers to Written Inquiries Posted: Friday, August 27, 2021
Initial Response(s) Due: Friday, September 10, 2021, 2:00 P.M. Eastern Time *(also known as the Bid Opening Date)*
Review of Responses: Responses will be reviewed through October 2021.
Anticipated Notification of Initial Selection Decisions: Notifications may start as early as October 2021 and continue through November 2021.
Award of Initial Contracts: Awards may start as early as November 2021 and continue through December 2021.
Negotiations: Negotiations may start as early as November 2021 and continue through December 2021.
Anticipated Start Date of Contracts: January 1, 2022.

Times are Eastern Standard/Daylight Savings (US), as displayed on the COMMBUYS system clock displayed to Bidders after logging in. If there is a conflict between the dates in this Procurement Calendar and dates in the Bid's Header, the dates in the Bid's Header on COMMBUYS shall prevail. Bidders are responsible for checking the Bid record, including Bid Q&A, on COMMBUYS for Procurement Calendar updates.

2.23 Bidders' Conference

Attendance at the Bidders' Conference is optional but is strongly recommended.

Date: Friday, August 6, 2021
Time: 10:00AM - 12:00PM
Location: WebEx: MA DCF Parenting Capacity Evaluation Bidders' Conference
Join online:
https://pcgus.webex.com/pcgus/j.php?MTID=m3c524edde1393c53fa6af4a8a56f0194
Meeting number: 132 367 0851
Password: DCFpce2021
Join by phone:
+1-669-234-1708 US Toll
1-844-531-9388 US Toll free
Access code: 132 367 0851

2.24 Written Inquires

Potential Bidders may submit written questions about the RFR to ServicesNetwork@mass.gov. Questions must be submitted by the date and time specified in **Section 3.12** to be considered. The Department will review questions received and will post written answers on COMMBUYS as specified in **Section 3.12**.

2.25 Prohibited Communications

Bidders are prohibited from communicating directly with any employee of DCF or any members of the Procurement Management Team (PMT) regarding this RFR except as specified in **Section 3.1** of the RFR. No other individual Commonwealth employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFR. Neither telephone calls, nor faxes, nor texts nor emails regarding this RFR will be accepted. DCF is not bound by any oral comments or representations made by the contact person and/or any other employee of DCF. Bidders may contact the contact person using the contact information provided on the Bid Solicitation page for this Bid in the event that this RFR is incomplete or information is missing.

Bidders experiencing technical problems accessing information or attachments stored on COMMBUYS should contact the COMMBUYS Helpdesk at commbuys@state.ma.us.

Section 4: Fiscal Specifications

Referrals for parental capacity evaluations to any of the contracted evaluators are in the sole discretion of the Department and will be made based on the Department's need for culturally and linguistically competent and impartial parenting capacity evaluations; Contractors' ongoing service performance; available capacity; location and ease of access for youth and families; ability to meet the unique specialized needs of the youth and family to be evaluated, including cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, communication needs, disability accommodations; and maximization of evaluation service at the applicable service rate.

2.27 Unit Rates

Contractors will be reimbursed for service on a unit rate basis. The unit of service applicable to these rates is per hour of conducting or writing the evaluation, testifying in court, or participating in a DCF clinical review. The hourly rate for the services defined in this RFR are set at a fixed value for services delivered in each state fiscal year[2] over duration of the contract as shown in the charts below for ***Individuals*** and ***Organizations***. Unique rates for specific vendors will not be negotiated. Rates may be adjusted at contract

[2] Services delivered in each state fiscal year are defined as services delivered on or between July 1st to June 30th, ending on June 30th of the calendar year of the same number as the state fiscal year in question.

renewal at the sole discretion of DCF. DCF will not reimburse for mileage or travel costs other than the hourly rate for travel time shown below.

Hourly rates for Individuals

	Hourly Rate (Services)	Hourly Rate (Travel)
FY22 - FY23	$ 125.00	$ 31.25
FY24 - FY25	$ 127.50	$ 31.88
FY26 - FY27	$ 130.05	$ 32.51
FY28 - FY29	$ 132.65	$ 33.16
FY30 - FY31	$ 135.30	$ 33.83
FY32 - FY33	$ 138.01	$ 34.50

Hourly rates for Organizations

	Hourly Rate (Services)	Hourly Rate (Travel)
FY22 - FY23	$ 137.50	$ 34.38
FY24 - FY25	$ 140.25	$ 35.06
FY26 - FY27	$ 143.06	$ 35.76
FY28 - FY29	$ 145.92	$ 36.48
FY30 - FY31	$ 148.83	$ 37.21
FY32 - FY33	$ 151.81	$ 37.95

2.28 Payment and Fiscal Reporting Requirements

Contractors will be paid utilizing the Commonwealth's accounting system, Massachusetts Management Accounting Reporting system (MMARS).

2.29 Invoice and Payment Specifications

The Contractor will not charge or accept a fee for service from a participant in the services under this contract.

The plan is for Contractors to be sent monthly a pre-populated invoice of the services that were authorized by DCF. Contractors must reconcile and modify where appropriate and return the signed invoice to the DCF Central Office, which will process the payment for the actual services provided. If the pre-populated invoice method is not possible, Contractors must submit a Service Delivery Report (SDR) on a monthly basis by the 15th of the month after services have been rendered, indicating the date, description and charges.

Guidance regarding payment and billing will be discussed during contract negotiations.

2.30 Start-Up Costs

DCF will not pay for any start-up costs.

2.31 Contract Expansion

If additional funds become available during the contract duration period, the Department reserves the right to increase funds to some or all contracts executed as a result of this RFR, or to execute contracts with Contractors not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory contract performance and service or commodity need.

2.32 Costs

Costs which are not specifically identified in the Bidder's response and accepted by DCF or a department as part of the contract, will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this RFR. The Commonwealth will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by Bidders responding to this RFR.

2.33 Contractual Status of Orders and Service Contracts

Orders or service engagements placed under the Contract established as a result of this Bid by Eligible Entities shall be considered separate Contracts between the Eligible Entity and the Contractor and shall be deemed to incorporate all of the terms and conditions of the Contract. Nothing contained in any order or service contract shall amend or vary the terms of the Contract. Additional terms which do not conflict with the Commonwealth's Terms and Conditions, the Massachusetts Standard Contract Form, this Bid and any amendments, or the Bidder's Quote, may be included in an order or service contract if mutually agreed upon by the Contractor and eligible entity.

2.34 Reservation of Rights

This RFR does not commit DCF to award any contracts, or to purchase any services if contracts are awarded. DCF reserves the right to accept or reject any and all responses received as a result of this RFR, to negotiate with any or all Bidders and Bidders selected that are determined Qualified, and to cancel in part or in its entirely the RFR if it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to do so. DCF reserves the right to make contract changes and/or amendments during the term of the procurement as a result of contract monitoring and evaluation. DCF also reserves the right to reconfigure the service specifications at any time during the procurement cycle.

Section 5: Service Specifications

EOHHS recognizes the importance of information technology in supporting DCF and its partner providers in their work to enhance the safety, well-being, and permanent connections of Commonwealth youth. Having timely and secure access to accurate, comprehensive, and relevant information is critical to child welfare decision making and child safety.

Successful Bidders must maintain an information technology (IT) infrastructure that supports the needs of its staff, including subcontractors and affiliates, and is able to integrate with the technology employed by EOHHS/DCF. Bidder technology requirements include but may not be limited to:

- **High Speed Internet Connectivity**: Successful Bidders must have the ability to regularly access the internet at each service delivery site via an internet connection that is capable of high-speed data transmission. Bidder staff may also access the internet via mobile devices leveraging high speed wireless and/or cellular connections.
- **Computing & Network Infrastructure**: Successful Bidders are responsible for ensuring that their staff, including any subcontractors and affiliates, have the necessary computing equipment and supporting technology infrastructure to provide the services outlined in this RFR. This includes providing computing devices, printers, and other necessary information technology and telecommunication equipment and infrastructure. Successful Bidders must install and support a physical/virtual computing environment with the minimum configuration as follows:
    - Computers: Staff must be equipped with a modern computing device, including a desktop computer, laptop, Surface Pro, or similar computing device capable of using standard web-based applications. Following are the minimum requirements for computing devices to be utilize by the successful Bidder. Devices must include:
        - Internet Browser – including a currently supported version of Chrome or a comparable internet browser, such as Firefox or Safari
        - Microsoft Office Suite applications – including a currently supported version of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
        - Virus Protection – including appropriate and updated virus protection software with regular updates
    - Printers: Successful Bidders must ensure that there is a sufficient number of printers available to meet the printing needs of their staff.
    - Other Equipment/Infrastructure: Successful Bidders must ensure their staff have access to other information technology and telecommunication equipment and infrastructure as needed to communicate with DCF and provide the services outlined in this RFR. This may include desktop/cellular phone service, fax capabilities, electronic file storage, and more.

- **Web Meetings/Video Conferencing**: Successful Bidders must be capable of participating in web meetings/video conferences using a Commonwealth provided web-meeting service, such as WebEx, Teams, or other similar products.
- **Email**: Successful Bidders must ensure that all their staff have regular access to a reliable and secure email solution. In addition, Bidders must utilize the Commonwealth Secure File and Email Delivery System as needed to exchange confidential information. This will include, but may not be limited to, securely emailing parenting capacity evaluation reports to the Department of Children and Families staff and/or its partners. For additional information about secure email practices go to https://www.mass.gov/guides/how-to-use-email-securely.
- **Security**: Successful Bidders may have electronic access to sensitive and/or confidential information including, but not limited to, personally identifying (PII) and/or personal health information. Bidders are responsible for ensuring the security of their information technology resources including any data accessed on or contained within those resources.
    - System Security: Successful Bidders must ensure that all Contractor-provided information and telecommunication systems are secure from unauthorized access and use. This includes ensuring the security of any sensitive and/or confidential data contained therewithin.
    - Cyber Security: Successful Bidders must ensure that reasonable precautions are in place, including adequate technology policies and practices, to help manage the risk presented by ransomware, data theft, online scams, and other cybercrimes.

    More information about the Commonwealth's security policies is available at https://www.mass.gov/orgs/enterprise-security-office.
- **Virtual Gateway Business Services:** EOHHS operates the Virtual Gateway business services, which permit users to access a variety of EOHHS (DCF) programs and services. Virtual Gateway business services are accessible by end users with modern web browsers, such as Chrome or Firefox, and an Internet connection that is capable of high-speed data transmission. Upon execution of a Contract, Contractors may be required to access certain services through the Virtual Gateway and will be required to comply with all applicable EOHHS and Agencies policies and procedures related to such services.

    Contractors must use all business services through the Virtual Gateway required by EOHHS and the Agencies and to take all necessary steps to ensure that they and their subcontractors or affiliates have access to and utilize these web-based services.

    Contractors must execute and submit any and all required agreements, including any subcontracts, memorandums of agreement, confidentiality and/or end user agreements in connection with obtaining necessary end user accounts for any Virtual Gateway business service.

    During the term of this contract, EOHHS may implement and enhance a number of business services through the Virtual Gateway which may include, but not be limited to,

the following. Should those technological enhancements impact successful Bidders' ongoing service provision, those successful Bidders will be required to use those services as directed, consistent with all applicable guidance as well as EOHHS and EOTSS policies and procedures.

- **i-FamilyNet**: i-FamilyNet is the enterprise child welfare case management system used by DCF and contracted service providers to support youth and families. During the term of the contract, successful Bidders may be required to use certain modules of the web-based i-FamilyNet system. For example, during the term of the contract successful Bidders may be required to utilize i-FamilyNet to upload completed evaluation reports, run reports, and more.
- **Enterprise Invoice/Service Management (EIM/ESM)**: EIM/ESM is an Internet billing and reporting service. During the term of the contract, EOHHS/DCF may require Contractors to utilize EIM/ESM and/ a similar electronic invoicing and billing process.
- **Other EOHHS/Virtual Gateway Business Services** as applicable.

For additional information about the Virtual Gateway business services go to mass.gov/vg.

2.36 Secure Records

The Contractor must ensure that all electronic and paper notes and records related to the case and pertaining to the parenting capacity evaluation are stored in a secure location.

Each Contractor shall provide to all staff working under one of the Parenting Capacity Evaluation contracts copies of the RFR, Agency Response and applicable DCF policies within three weeks of the staff person's assignment to the contract.

2.37 RFR Forms

All forms and terms included under the Bid Attachments of the COMMBUYS file of this RFR are expressly incorporated herein by this reference and are made a part of this RFR. Bidders should review these forms and terms in detail.

2.38 Geographic Service and Delivery Areas

In their responses, Bidders must indicate which Regions they are able to serve, opting out of certain Area Offices if needed. DCF may negotiate defined service areas with Bidders, especially when the Bidder offers unique specialized expertise that may be needed in multiple geographic locations across the Commonwealth.

The Bidder must provide services within the contracted service delivery area selected when properly authorized and as requested by DCF.

2.39 Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan

Program Background

Pursuant to Executive Order 565, the Commonwealth's Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) promotes business-to-business relationships between awarded Contractors and diverse businesses and non-profit organizations ("SDP Partners") certified or recognized by the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO).

Financial Commitment Requirements

All Bidders responding to this solicitation are required to make a meaningful financial commitment ("SDP Commitment") to partnering with one or more SDO-certified or recognized diverse business enterprise or non-profit organization. This SDP Commitment must be expressed as a percentage of any contract sales resulting from this solicitation that would be spent with the SDP Partner(s).

After contract award (if any), the Total SDP Commitment shall become a contractual requirement to be met annually on a Massachusetts fiscal year basis (July 1 – June 30) for the duration of the contract.

The minimum total SDP Commitment acceptable in responses to this solicitation shall be 1%. Bidders shall be awarded additional evaluation points for higher SDP Commitments.

No contract shall be awarded to a Bidder without an SDP Commitment that meets the requirements stated herein. This requirement extends to **all** Bidders regardless of their own supplier diversity certification.

Eligible SDP Partner Certification Categories

SDP Partners must be business enterprises and/or non-profit organizations certified or recognized by the SDO in one or more of the following certification categories:

- Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Minority Non-Profit Organization (M/NPO)
- Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Women Non-Profit Organization (W/NPO)
- Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (VBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)
- Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Business Enterprise (LBGTBE)

Eligible Types of Business-to-Business Relationships

Bidders and Contractors may engage SDP Partners in the following two ways:

- **Subcontracting**, defined as a partnership in which the SDP partner is involved in the provision of products and/or services to the Commonwealth.
- **Ancillary Products and Services**, defined as a business relationship in which the SDP partner provides products or services that are not directly related to the Contractor's contract with the Commonwealth but may be related to the Contractor's own operational needs.

Other types of business-to-business relationships are not acceptable under this contract. All provisions of this RFR applicable to subcontracting shall apply equally to the engagement of SDP Partners as subcontractors.

Program Flexibility
The SDP encompasses the following provisions to support Bidders in establishing and maintaining sustainable business-to-business relationships meeting their needs:

- SDP Partners are **not** required to be subcontractors.
- SDP Partners are **not** required to be Massachusetts-based businesses.
- SDP Partners **may be changed or added** during the term of the contract as long as the Contractor continues to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Plan Form Requirements
All Bidders must complete the SDP Plan Form included in this solicitation and attach it to their bid response. In addition to proposing an SDP Commitment, each Bidder must propose one or more SDP Partner(s) to utilize in order to meet its SDP Commitment. Certified diverse Bidders may not list their own companies, or their subsidiaries or affiliates, as SDP Partners and may not meet their SDP Commitment by spending funds internally or with their own subsidiaries or affiliates.

Bidders may propose SDP Partners that are:

- **Already certified or recognized by the SDO:** Such partners appear in the SDO Directory of Certified Businesses or in the U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs VetBiz Vendor Information Pages directory. After contract award (if any), spending with such partners will contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment.

- **Not yet certified or recognized by the SDO:** Such partners must be certified in eligible categories by a third-party certification body, such as another city or state supplier diversity certification office, the National Minority Supplier Development Council, the Women Business Enterprise National Council, Disability:IN, or the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC), but not listed in the above-mentioned directories. Self-certification is not acceptable. While Bidders may list such proposed SDP Partners on their SDP Plans, spending with such partners will **not** contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment unless they apply for and are granted SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition. If proposed SDP Partners do not receive SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition, then the Contractor must find alternative SDP Partners in order to meet their SDP Commitment.

  It is the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure that their proposed SDP Partners obtain such certification or recognition by the SDO after contract award (if any). The issuing department and the SDO will not conduct outreach to proposed SDP Partners to ensure their certification. Furthermore, no guarantee can be made that a proposed SDP Partner will be certified, or regarding the time it may take to process a proposed SDP Partner certification. Contractors may direct partners to the SDO's homepage, www.mass.gov/sdo and the Certification Self-Assessment Tool for guidance on applying for certification.

It is desirable that Bidders provide an SDP Focus Statement that describe the bidder's overall approach to increasing the participation of diverse businesses in the provision of

products and services under this proposal/contract (subcontracting) and in the bidder's general business operations (ancillary products and services). Such a description may include but not be limited to:

- A clearly stated purpose or goal.
- Specific types of diverse and small businesses targeted.
- Which departments/units within the business are responsible for implementing supplier diversity.
- Types of opportunities for which diverse and small businesses are considered.
- Specific measures/methods of engagement of diverse and small businesses.
- An existing internal supplier diversity policy.
- Public availability of the company supplier diversity policy.

It is also desirable that Bidders use the SDP Plan Form to describe additional creative initiatives (if any) related to engaging, buying from and/or collaborating with diverse businesses. Such initiatives may include but not be limited to:

- Serving as a mentor in a mentor-protégé relationship.
- Technical and financial assistance provided to diverse businesses.
- Participation in joint ventures between nondiverse and diverse businesses.
- Voluntary assistance programs by which nondiverse business employees are loaned to diverse businesses or by which diverse business employees are taken into viable business ventures to acquire training and experience in managing business affairs.

Evaluation of SDP Forms

To encourage substantial Bidder supplier diversity initiatives and commitments as measures valuable to the Commonwealth, at least 25% of the total available evaluation points for this bid solicitation shall be allocated to the evaluation of the SDP Plan submissions. Because the purpose of the SDP is to promote business-to-business partnerships, the Bidders' workforce diversity initiatives will not be considered in the evaluation.

SDP Spending Reports and Compliance

After contract award, Contractors shall be required to provide quarterly reports demonstrating compliance with the agreed-upon SDP Commitment.

Only spending with SDP Partners that appear in the SDO Directory of Certified Businesses or in the U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs VetBiz Vendor Information Pages directory shall be counted toward a Contractor's compliance with their SDP Commitment. Spending with SDP Partners that do not appear in the directories above shall not be counted towards meeting a Contractor's SDP Commitment.

It is always the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure they meet their SDP Commitment, and the SDO, and the issuing department, assume no responsibility for any Contractor's failure to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Spending Verification

The SDO and the contracting department reserve the right to contact SDP Partners at any time to request that they attest to the amounts reported to have been paid to them by the Contractor.

Program Resources and Assistance
Contractors seeking assistance in the development of their SDP Plans or identification of potential SDP Partners may visit the SDP webpage, www.mass.gov/sdp, or contact the SDP Help Desk at sdp@mass.gov.

2.40 Agencies' Reports and Applicable Statutes, Regulations, and Policies/Procedures

A Contractor must meet all applicable EOHHS and DCF regulations and policies. This includes, but is not limited to, the EOHHS Criminal Offender Record Checks regulation 101 CMR 15.00.

Section 6: Response Requirements

A Bidder, by submitting a response to this RFR, is affirming its intention to comply with all requirements of this RFR, including, but not limited to, any specialized accreditation, licensing, and quality management.

2.42 Submission Deadline

Responses received by the "Bid Opening Date" of Friday, September 10, 2021 by 2:00 P.M. Eastern Time will be included in the initial review, with contracts anticipated to begin by January 1, 2022. Bidders applying after September 10, 2021 must notify ServicesNetwork@mass.gov when submitting a bid.

Submissions received after September 10, 2021 at 2:00 P.M. will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

2.43 Right to Modify Deadline

DCF reserves the right to modify the RFR, including the response due date.

2.44 Submission Location

Online response submission via COMMBUYS is required. All Bidders must submit a response online using tools available only to Sellers registered in COMMBUYS. COMMBUYS provides Seller registration functionality at no charge. To register, go to www.COMMBUYS.com and click on the "Register" link on the front page. All Bidders who are awarded a contract resulting from this Bid, if any, will be required to maintain an active account during the duration of the Contract, by reviewing their registration information regularly and maintaining its accuracy.

2.45 Electronic Proposal Submission Format

Responses must be submitted and uploaded on COMMBUYS in .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, or .pdf files. Files must be in the following format: type-written 12 point Times New Roman or similar font, one-inch margins, 8½ X 11 inch paper, single spaced and with page numbers in the lower right corner. Scanned versions of the RFR Response Sheet will not be accepted. Zipped files will be accepted and must be in a .zip format when saved, containing only .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, or .pdf files. Other zip file formats will not be accepted.

Bidders shall upload all the files with the following file name convention:
Name of Files: [Provider Name] RFR Cover Sheet and Checklist
[Provider Name] RFR Response Sheet
Name of Zip File (if using Zip File): Provider Name

2.46 Page Limits and Attachments

The Bidder's Response Sheet shall not exceed twelve pages. No attachments will be accepted. All pages in excess of the stated page limit will be removed from the Bidder's response. The Cover Sheet and Checklist, and SPD Plan Form, are not included in the page limit.

2.47 Bidder's Response

The Bidder's response consists of the RFR Cover Sheet and Checklist, RFR Response Sheet, and SDP Plan Form.

2.47.1 RFR Cover Sheet and Checklist

A Bidder must submit a completed, signed, and dated, RFR Cover Sheet and Checklist as the Cover page to this bid. This form is located in the COMMBUYS posting of this RFR on the Bid Solicitation page under "File Attachments."

2.47.2 RFR Response Sheet

The RFR Response Sheet identifies required questions and is located in the COMMBUYS posting of this RFR on the Bid Solicitation page under "File Attachments." Bidder inserts responses directly on the RFR Response Sheet under each specific requirement/question. A Bidder must submit a completed Response Sheet, answering all questions on that sheet and not exceeding the page limits listed on that sheet. No attachments shall be accepted in response to the questions asked on the Response sheet; all responses must be limited to the sheet.

2.47.3 Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan Form

A Bidder must submit a completed and responsive SDP Plan Form, as described in **Section 5.5**, as a part of their Response.

2.48 Style of the Response Packages

Each Response Package shall consist of the documents listed in the applicable RFR Cover Sheet and Checklist. Each Response Package must be submitted as described in **Sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.9**.

2.49 Alterations

Bidders may not alter (manually or electronically) the RFR language or any RFR component files, except as directed in the RFR. Modifications to the body of the RFR, specifications, terms and conditions, or which change the intent of this RFR are prohibited and may disqualify a response.

2.50 Ownership of Submitted Responses

DCF shall be under no obligation to return any responses or materials submitted by a Bidder in response to this RFR. All materials submitted by Bidders become the property of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and will not be returned to the Bidder. The Commonwealth reserves the right to use any ideas, concepts, or configurations that are presented in a Bidder's response, whether or not the Bidder is awarded a contract or selected for all programs or approved for all service models for which it submitted a response.

2.51 Electronic Signatures

Responses submitted via COMMBUYS must be signed electronically by the Bidder or the Bidder's Agent by accepting the terms and conditions of the bid on the "Terms & Conditions" tab of the Bid in COMMBUYS. By selecting "Save & Continue" on the "Terms and Conditions" tab after accepting the terms and conditions of the bid, the submitter attests that s/he is an agent of the Bidder with authority to sign on the Bidder's behalf, and that s/he has read and assented to each document's terms.

2.52 Ink Signatures

Original pen and ink signature documents are required upon contract award and contract negotiation unless otherwise stated.

2.53 Multiple Responses

Bidders may not submit Multiple Responses (what COMMBUYS.com refers to as "Multiple Quotes") unless the RFR authorizes them to do so. If a Bidder submits multiple responses where the RFR does not authorize multiple responses, only the latest dated response submitted prior to the bid opening date will be evaluated.

2.54 Response Content

RFR specifications will prevail over any proposed Bidder terms entered as part of the response, unless otherwise specified in the RFR.

2.55 Minimum Response Duration

Bidders' responses to this RFR must remain in effect for at least 90 days from the date of submission.

Section 7: Review Process

DCF staff will first review the responses to determine if they satisfy the submission format and contents requirements set forth in **Sections 6.5** to **6.9** and the SDP Plan requirements in **Section 5.5**. A response that meets these requirements will be considered an "Eligible Response." Any response that does not meet these requirements may be considered non-responsive and disqualified without further review. If a response is disqualified, the Bidder (person designated to execute contract) will be notified in writing, including the reasons why it was disqualified. DCF may determine that the non-compliance is insubstantial and can be readily corrected, or that an alternative proposed by the Bidder is acceptable. In such case, DCF can seek clarification or allow the Bidder to make minor corrections.

2.57 Review Team

DCF will establish a Review Team to review and rate eligible responses. A Review Team may consist of DCF staff, recipients or former recipients of services, family members, family advisory committee members, community representatives and/or other non-DCF personnel. The Review Team will review and rate the Response Packages of Eligible Responses.

2.58 Preliminary Reviews

A Review Team may ask other DCF staff to complete preliminary reviews of the certain response categories (e.g., the **Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan**); such preliminary reviews shall be done consistently with all applicable Response Packages. The SDP is discussed more fully in the RFR in **Section 5.5**.

2.59 Oral Presentations

A Review Team may, in its sole discretion, invite those Bidders whose responses have been judged competitive and responsive in the course of the evaluation to attend an oral presentation. At that time, the Bidder's response may be discussed and clarified, but not changed in any way. DCF reserves the right to apply restrictions to the structure and content of the oral presentation, and to instruct the Bidder regarding attendees. Oral presentations will not be open to the public nor to any competitors. Failure of a Bidder to agree to a date and time for an oral presentation may result in rejection of the Bidder's response.

2.60 Clarifications

A Review Team, at its discretion, may in lieu of or in addition to oral presentations request Bidders to submit written clarification of their responses. The Review Team will send written questions for clarification to Bidders for the Bidders to respond in writing. Clarifications are explanations of what has been stated in the response and may not be used as an opportunity to submit supplemental information or change a response, unless the Review Team specifically requests these submissions or changes as part of the clarification of all responses.

2.61 Evaluating and Rating

All qualified responses shall be reviewed using a standard Proposal Review and Evaluation Process. DCF will use a consensus model of evaluating proposals whereby the Review Team members independently read and review their assigned proposals and then meet as a group to discuss and jointly rate and score each eligible proposal. All qualified proposals shall be reviewed using the RFR Evaluation Sheet tailored specifically for this RFR (Attachment E).

The Review Team will consider and score each item in the Bidder's Response, taking into consideration the comprehensiveness, responsiveness, clarity, effectiveness, and feasibility of the response to each requirement. Scores will be whole numbers or include no more than one decimal point.

The Review Team will sum the points earned for all questions and for the SDP Plan, and then assign a rating to the total points, with a rating of Poor for 0-115 points, Fair for 116-143 points, Good for 144-165 points, Excellent for 166-185 points, and Exceptional for 186-206 points. A minimum subtotaled score of 109 points on Questions 1 through 9 of the Response Sheet, and an overall total minimum rating of "Good", are required to pass the evaluation.

2.62 Information Subject to Review

In the review process, DCF may use sources of information other than the Bidder's written response to evaluate the response. Other sources of information may include, but are not limited to, oral presentations by the Bidder, written responses to questions posed by a Review Team, the Bidder's history and/or experience in providing services to youth and/or families, the Bidder's past performance as a provider, a review of current services operated by the Bidder, materials submitted for Financial Qualification purposes, a review of the Bidder's finances, discussion with relevant community members or providers, governmental agencies and other funding sources.

2.63 Recommendation for Selection

After a Review Team rates all the eligible Response Packages, it shall list all the eligible responses and their scores and selection recommendation. The Review Team will then

submit its recommendation to the awarding authority or designee, together with its recommendation of items for negotiation with the Bidder regarding the program.

2.64 Best Value

The Review Team may recommend for selection the response that demonstrates the best value overall, including proposed alternatives which will achieve the procurement goals of DCF, including the goal of contract expenditure reduction. The Review Team and a selected Bidder may negotiate a change in any element of contract performance or cost identified in the original RFR or the selected Bidder's response which results in lower costs or a more cost-effective or better value than was presented in the selected Bidder's original response. DCF reserves the right to request a best and final offer (BAFO) from any Bidder. The Review Team may recommend the non-highest scoring Bidder, however the recommendation must contain an explanation based on best value principles.

2.65 Selection Decisions

Upon receipt of a Review Team's recommendation, the awarding authority or designee shall prioritize the responses based on the Team's recommendation and on what the awarding authority or designee determine gives the Commonwealth the best value, considering the elements set forth in 801 CMR 21.02: support the achievement of required outcomes, best quality economic value, timely performance, minimizing the burdens on administrative resources, expediting simple or routine purchases, flexibility in developing alternative procurement and business relationships, encouraging competition, encouraging the continuing participation of quality Contractors and supporting procurement planning and implementation. The awarding authority or designee is not bound by the evaluations or rankings submitted by the Review Team.

2.66 Selection Decision and Notification

All Bidders will be notified in writing of the selection decision regarding the award.

2.67 Contract Negotiations

Contract negotiations will commence with the Bidder first on the awarding authority's or designee's prioritized list for selection and negotiations. Negotiations shall be limited to those matters specified in 801 CMR 21.07. If negotiations are successful, the Bidder will be deemed selected for the award.

If negotiations are not successful within a reasonable period of time, the awarding authority or designee may disqualify that Bidder and begin negotiations with the next Bidder on the prioritized list for selection and negotiations.

2.68 Announcement

Pursuant to 801 CMR 21.06(13), no Bidder shall have any press conferences, or make any news releases or announcements concerning its selection or non-selection for a program

prior to DCF public release of said information, or prior to the written authorization of DCF. Violation of this subsection may be considered grounds for disqualification.

Section 8: Business Specifications

The terms of *801 CMR 21.00: Procurement of Commodities and Services* (and *808 CMR 1.00: Compliance, Reporting and Auditing for Human and Social Services*, if applicable) are incorporated by reference into this RFR. Words used in this RFR shall have the meanings defined in 801 CMR 21.00 (and 808 CMR 1.00, if applicable). Additional definitions may also be identified in this RFR. Other terms not defined elsewhere in this document may be defined in OSD's Glossary of Terms. Unless otherwise specified in this RFR, all communications, responses, and documentation must be in English, all measurements must be provided in feet, inches, and pounds and all cost proposals or figures in U.S. currency. All responses must be submitted in accordance with the specific terms of this RFR.

During the term of this Agreement and for a period of six years thereafter, DCF, its auditors, the Operational Services Division, the Office of the Inspector General or other authorized representatives shall be afforded access at reasonable times to Contractor's accounting records, including sales information on any system, reports or files, in order to audit all records relating to goods sold or services performed pursuant to this Agreement. If such an audit indicates that Contractor has materially overcharged DCF, then the Contractor shall remit the overcharged amount and be responsible for payment of any costs associated with the audit.

2.70 CORI Checks

For any program that is not licensed by EEC, the program shall complete a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check for all employees or other persons regularly providing services pursuant to this RFR, in accordance with 101 CMR 15.00 (EOHHS regulations governing Criminal Offender Record Checks). These regulations establish a core standardized policy regarding the review of criminal records for employment. It is the policy of EOHHS that an individual's background including any CORI and other relevant information be carefully considered so that the vulnerable populations served by EOHHS are protected. It is also the policy of EOHHS that qualified rehabilitated offenders are given a fair opportunity to be employed and successfully reintegrated into the workforce. In addition, as provided in 101 CMR 15.09(5), the hiring authority must comply with the requirements of the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services governing CORI at 803 CMR 2.00 et seq.

All programs shall also work with the Department's Background Record Check Unit to complete a Department history / child protective services check for all employees or other persons regularly providing services pursuant to this RFR.

Both the CORI check and the Department history check shall be completed for all employees or other persons regularly providing services pursuant to this RFR at the time that the contract

is executed, as well as during the hiring/on-boarding process of any prospective employees or other relevant persons. The program shall maintain documentation of these checks in each individual's personnel file, in accordance with the confidentiality provisions of 803 CMR 2.00 et seq.

2.71 Debarment

The Contractor assures that the Contractor and any of its subcontractors are not currently debarred or suspended by the federal or state government under any law or regulation including. Executive Order 147; G.L. c. 29, s 29F and G.L. c. 152, s. 25C; and agrees to notify the Department in the event that the Contractor or any of its subcontractors become debarred or suspended.

2.72 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

All Bidders responding to this RFR must agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the Bidder can provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both Contractors and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe and reliable payment directly to Contractors and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Contractors are able to track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller's Vendor Web system. A link to the EFT application can be found on the OSD Forms page (www.mass.gov/osd). Additional information about EFT is available on the VendorWeb site (www.mass.gov/osc). Click on MASSfinance.

Successful Bidders, upon notification of contract award, will be required to enroll in EFT as a contract requirement by completing and submitting the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* to this department for review, approval and forwarding to the Office of the Comptroller. If the Bidder is already enrolled in the program, it may so indicate in its response. Because the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* contains banking information, this form, and all information contained on this form, shall not be considered a public record and shall not be subject to public disclosure through a public records request.

The requirement to use EFT may be waived by the Procurement Management Team (PMT) on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the Bidder. If a Bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in its response. The PMT will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and communicate the findings with the Bidder.

2.73 HIPAA: Business Associate Contractual Obligations

Bidders are notified that any department meeting the definition of a Covered Entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) will include in the RFR and resulting contract sufficient language establishing the successful Bidder's contractual obligations, if any, that the department will require to comply with HIPAA and the privacy and security regulations promulgated thereunder (45 CFR Parts 160, 162, and 164) (the Privacy and Security Rules). For example, if the department determines that the

successful Bidder is a business associate performing functions or activities involving protected health information, as such terms are used in the Privacy and Security Rules, then the department will include in the RFR and resulting contract a sufficient description of business associate's contractual obligations regarding the privacy and security of the protected health information, as listed in 45 CFR 164.314 and 164.504 (e), including, but not limited to, the Bidder's obligation to: implement administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that reasonably and appropriately protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the protected health information (in whatever form it is maintained or used, including verbal communications); provide individuals access to their records; and strictly limit use and disclosure of the protected health information for only those purposes approved by the department. Further, the department reserves the right to add any requirement during the course of the contract that it determines must be included in the contract to comply with the Privacy and Security Rules. Please see other sections of the RFR for further HIPAA details, if applicable.

2.74 Notice about Method of Payment

The Department reserves the right to change the method of payment during the life of the contract.

2.75 Public Records

All responses and information submitted in response to this RFR are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L., c. 66, s. 10, and to c. 4, s. 7, ss. 26. Any statements in submitted responses that are inconsistent with these statutes shall be disregarded.

2.76 Reasonable Accommodation

Bidders with disabilities or hardships that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of RFR information in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to the contact person for the RFR. Requests for accommodation will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. A Bidder requesting accommodation must submit a written statement which describes the Bidder's disability and the requested accommodation to the contact person for the RFR. The Procurement Management Team reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

2.77 Reporting

Contractors are responsible for compliance with all other contract reporting requirements including, but not limited to, Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) and other contract reports, as required by this contract.

2.78 Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal

Bidders and Contractors are not allowed to display the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Seal in their bid package or subsequent marketing materials if they are awarded a contract because use of the coat of arms and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth for advertising or

commercial purposes is prohibited by law.

2.79 Subcontracting Policies

Prior approval of DCF is required for any subcontracted service of the contract. Contractors are responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Human and social service subcontractors are also required to meet the same state and federal financial and program reporting requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as Contractors.

2.80 Supplier Diversity Program Subcontracting Policies

In addition to the Subcontracting Policies (See Subcontracting Policies section above and see Section 9, Subcontracting By Contractor, in the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions) that apply to all subcontracted services, agencies may define specific required deliverables for a Contractor's SDP Plan, including, but not limited to, documentation necessary to verify subcontractor commitments and expenditures with Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises (SDVOBE) for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing commitments made in a Contractor's Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan.

Section 9: Contracting Policies

At the time of negotiations, DCF will work with successful Bidders to complete all mandatory contract documents including:

- Commonwealth Standard Contract Form & incorporated Commonwealth Standard
- Terms and Conditions for Health and Human Services
- Request for Taxpayer Identification Number & Certification Form (W-9) (if not already on file)
- Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment form (mandatory, if not already on EFT)
- Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing Form
- Scope of Work
- Clarifications/Negotiated Adjustments/Modifications Form
- Subcontract Information Form (when applicable)
- Contractor's response, exclusive of any terms that are inconsistent with RFR
- Other terms and conditions the Contractor agreed to as part of contract negotiations

Please review all forms to be sure your agency understands the terms and conditions when entering into a contract with the Commonwealth.

2.82 Contractor's Contact Information

It is the Contractor's responsibility to notify their DCF Contract Manager named on their current contract DCF when there are any changes in the Contractor's contact information (i.e. address, phone number, email, signatory, etc.). If the information is not current, the Contractor must notify DCF immediately. The information shall also be sent as follows:

Director of Procurement and Contracts
Department of Children and Families
600 Washington Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02111

The Commonwealth assumes no responsibility if a Contractor's designated email address is not current, or if there are technical problems, including those with the Contractor's computer, network or internet service provider (ISP).

2.83 Transition Agreement

If, at the time of termination of a contract, a Contractor is conducting an evaluation for a youth or his/her family, the Contractor must work cooperatively with a successor Contractor, if any, to ensure a smooth and orderly transition and that evaluations are not interrupted. Items to be discussed may include but not limited to the transfer of data to new Contractor, no restrictions on new Contractor for the hiring of former Contractor's employees, overlapping of contract time frames, knowledge transfer, allowing for a rolling transfer approach. This requirement shall survive the expiration or termination of the contract.

2.84 Publicity

Any Bidder selected for a program under this RFR resulting in an award of or an amendment of a contract, is prohibited from selling or distributing any information collected or derived from the contract except as specifically authorized by DCF.

Section 10: Applicable Statutes, Regulations, and Policies/Procedures
Revised 2/23/2021

It is the Contractor's responsibility to adhere to and have the internal control procedures to appropriately access all applicable state and federal statutes, and including but not limited to the applicable statutes, regulations, and policies/procedures noted in this RFR. It is the responsibility of the Contractor to inform their staff and provide training to their staff when changes occur.
The Contractor is required to comply with all applicable federal statutes and regulations, including but not limited to the following:

Federal Statutes		
(1)	42 USC §620 et. seq.	Child and Family Services
(2)	42 USC §670 et. seq.	Foster Care and Adoption Assistance (as applicable)
(3)	42 USC § 5106a(b)(2)(A)	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
(4)	42 USC § 677	Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
(5)	42 USC §1397 et. seq.	Block Grants to States for Social Services (as applicable)
(6)	20 USC § 6081 et. seq.	Smoke Free Facilities (Child Care and Development block Award)
(7)	42 USC § 671(a)(18)	Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, as amended by the Interethnic Placement Act of 1996
(8)	42 USC §12101, et. seq.	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
(9)	45 CFR § 205.50	Confidentiality of Records

The provider is required to comply with all applicable Massachusetts statutes and regulations, including but not limited to the following:

Massachusetts Statutes		
(1)	G.L. c. 18B, §1 et. seq.	Department of Children and Families
(2)	G.L c. 66A	Fair Information Practices Act
(3)	G.L. c. 93H	Breach of Security
(4)	G.L. c. 112, §§ 135 – 135B	Confidential Communications Disclosure Prohibited; Exceptions; Testimonial Privilege
(5)	G.L. c. 119, §1 et. seq.	Protection and Care of Children, and Proceedings Against Them
(6)	G.L. c. 151B et. seq.	Unlawful Discrimination Because of Race, Color, Religious Creed, National Origin, Ancestry or Sex
(7)	G.L. c. 210 §§ 5C-5D	Adoption Records Confidentiality

Massachusetts Regulations		
(1)	110 CMR 1.00 et. seq.	Department of Children and Families
(4)	101 CMR 15.00	Executive Office of Health and Human Services Criminal Offender Record Checks
(5)	201 CMR 17.00	Standards for the Protection of Personal Information of

	Residents of the Commonwealth

Other	
(1) Executive Order 504	Security and Confidentiality of Personal Information

DCF policies, procedures, protocols and guidance, including DCF policies available on the DCF website (https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families) and other internal policies, procedures, protocols and guidance as applicable.