

Access and Visitation Program

Questions and Answers

Q1.1 Can this grant supplement an already existing supervised visitation program that only offers supervised visits through a specific funding source? For example, our current program only offers supervised visits for open DSS cases; CPS, and Child Welfare. Additional funding would fill existing significant gaps in service.

Q1.2 Can this program be implemented with an existing program providing similar services, or does it require complete separation?

Q1.3 On page 4 it states: The Grant Share for the 2019-2024 Access and Visitation Program can be used to create new, or expand upon existing, Access and Visitation Programs, however the money cannot replace any existing funding for similar types of program services. The funding that our organization has received in the past allows us to operate a supervised visitation program inside the County court building. We have struggled with OTDA funds being enough to cover the program as it exists already. Would proposing to simply keep this program service funded result in being disqualified because it is not a new or expanded service?

Q1.4: Our agency has a current contract with Erie County Department of Social Services to provide visitation services for cases of neglect. We provide visitation services through this contract for foster children and children placed in 1017 placement, to see their biological parent. As an agency with an existing grant to provide visitation services to the clientele of the Department of Social Services, are we allowed to apply for the OTDA RFP to expand our visitation services to those not involved in the child welfare system? (We understand that the RFP would not be for foster children)

A1: This money cannot replace any existing funding for similar types of program services, however it may be used to expand upon existing program services (e.g., offering services to additional populations not currently served). If a funding source is established for the *same* contract period, this grant funding cannot be used to fund services otherwise intended to be covered by the other established funding source. Therefore, proposing to continue current services into the *new* contract period would not result in disqualification.

Q2.1: Am I correct in understanding that the annual statewide allocation is \$509,256? If that is the case, how many programs do you foresee funding, and is there a maximum award per contract?

Q2.2: How many grants will be awarded?

Q2.3: How much money will each award include for the entire 5-year project period? (for each grant recipient)

Q2.4: The RFP states that a total of \$509,256 in federal funds are available to support AV programs. Is this a per program/funding cycle? A per program/year? Total funds per RFP?

Q2.5: Is there a minimum/maximum request for funding?

Q2.6: Is there an average funding request amount?

Q2.7: What is the number of applications to be funded? It looks like there will be 5 at \$509,256 annually.

A2: The annual statewide allocation is \$509,256, so the total of all awards will not exceed that sum for the first year. We have not determined how many programs we intend to fund; the number will be dependent upon the number of requests received, the amounts requested, and the quality of the programs described. There is no minimum or maximum request amount, and we will not know the amounts requested until proposals are reviewed. There is no maximum award per contract. The amount we offer in future years will depend upon the amount we receive from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement; this amount changes each year, so we cannot predict the five-year total.

Q3.1: Is there a geographic coverage requirement for each grant award? In other words, will OTDA consider making an award to an organization that provides services in one or two counties?

Q3.2: The RFP refers to geographic regions and states that OTDA will ensure the availability of funds statewide. Could you define the geographical regions to be funded?

Q3.3: Do you expect to fund rural programs?

Q3.4: What is the geographic area identified as eligible for this service? Are there particular counties identified?

Q3.5: Can a single application be submitted to provide these services to several counties?

A3: All proposals will be considered, regardless of location. There is no geographic coverage requirement. The OTDA will consider making awards to organizations that provide services in one or two counties, and a single application can be submitted to provide these services. We do not have specific areas we wish to fund, however we prefer not to allocate the bulk of the funds to one (1) geographical area. We reserve the right to fund lower-scoring proposals to avail funding to as many areas as possible.

Q4: Our question related to eligibility is two-fold.

- 1. Would the Center itself qualify as a not-for-profit community based organization (we are a 501c(3))? Or**
- 2. if we are not eligible to apply on our own, could we apply for funding by way of the local court system taking the lead?**

A4: As long as your 501c3 status is current, you may apply as the lead agency. Only not-for-profit community based organizations may apply.

Q5: What is the MWBE requirement for this RFA?

A5: The overall goal is 30% for M/WBE participation—15% for New York State-certified minority-owned business enterprise (MBE) participation and 15% for New York State-certified women-owned business enterprise (WBE) participation.

Q6: Are there promising programs/strategies you would like to see included in the applications?

A6: Please refer to the **Description of Services Sought** section of the RFP.

Q7: The RFP speaks of having licensed or certified counselors on board to perform counseling services. A) Are counseling services a requirement? B) Does the counselor need to be licensed in mental health counseling or social work or can they just hold a degree in Mental Health Counseling or Social Work?

A7: Counseling services are not a requirement. If provided, counseling should be done by a licensed or certified mental health professional. The professional should be licensed by the New York State Education Department or licensed/certified by another state. Programs are encouraged to require counselors who are licensed/certified elsewhere to seek NYS licensure timely.

Q8: The RFP speaks of having mediation services carried out by certified and train family mediators. Is mediation a requirement for the RFP and what kind of certification are you looking for?

A8: Mediation services are not required. New York State does not “certify” mediators, but mediators may be certified through their local [Community Dispute Resolution Center](#) or [member organization](#).

Q9.1: Page 7 of the RFP talks about choosing a combination of the five services (counseling, mediation, parent education, development of parenting plan, and visitation enforcement). How many of these services must be chosen and which ones are mandatory?

Q9.2: On page #8 there is a list of Services- is there a minimum number of services that are required to offer or do all need to be offered?

A9: At least one (1) of these services must be provided. None of these services are mandatory.

Q10: Will having a DSS contract along with this grant be a conflict of interest for either party?

A10: No.

Q11: Is there a specific budget sheet that must be submitted with the RFP proposal?

A11: No.

Q12: What expenses are allowable with this grant? More specifically, I'm wondering how much of the award total can be used toward office space rental.

A12: Allocated Administrative Overhead is limited to 15% of the grant award.

Q13: Can intern and volunteer hours be used to meet the 10% local share?

A13: Unpaid services (volunteers or unpaid interns) shall be valued at rates consistent with those normally paid for similar work. An amount for fringe benefits is allowable. The SSD's fringe benefit rate should be used up to a maximum rate of 30%. For example, if a monitor earns \$10,000 per year and fringe benefits are calculated at 20%, then a volunteer or unpaid intern working the same amount of time would be valued at \$12,000 per year. If the monitor did not receive fringe benefits, then the volunteer would be valued at \$10,000. Values of in-kind contributions may not be used if they have been counted toward matching another federal or State program or grant. The benefiting entity should exercise control or supervision over the in-kind contribution when practical. In other words, volunteers are supervised by program staff.

Q14: Are incarcerated non-custodial parents, their children and custodial parent or care giver eligible to receive services through this grant award? Is incarceration an eligible reason for a parent to be separated from their child?

A14: Incarcerated non-custodial parents, their children, and custodial parents are eligible to receive services through this grant award. Incarceration results in the absence of co-residence, so incarceration is a valid reason for a parent to be separated from his/her child(ren).

Q15.1: Are these mandated services whereby clients would be referred by legal or social service systems?

Q15.2: What is the referral base/system for this program? How will clients be referred/mandated?

A15: Yes, clients are referred by the local court.

Q16: Are there any required staffing patterns/caseload size or qualifications for the visitation or Parent Education program that need to be adhered to?

A16: No.

Q17: Are there any parameters with coordination of services with other community providers?

A17: No.

Q18: Has there been a needs assessment completed per county for the identified quantity of individuals/families in need and is there a needs assessment per service?

A18: No.

Q19: Attachment # 5 Staffing Plan- is to be completed by gender, race, etc. It is unlikely that when submitting this grant that these factors will be known. How is the information to be completed?

A19: The Contractor shall submit a staffing plan to document the composition of the proposed workforce to be utilized in the performance of the Contract by the specified categories listed, including ethnic background, gender, and federal occupational categories. The Contractor shall complete the staffing plan form and submit it as part of their bid or proposal *or within a reasonable time*, as directed by OTDA.

Q20: On page 7, section C Description of Services Sought states: Creative program proposals are encouraged. Historically, OTDA has only issued enough funds to operate supervised visitation. Previous RFP's have also given ranges of how much money will be awarded based on the number of individuals served. We have lots of ideas on how to expand services but do not want to lose points for overall cost effectiveness (page 12). Could you please elaborate on what is meant by creative proposals?

A20: Proposals that are considered creative are those that provide needed services to the eligible population, seek funding commensurate with the level of services to be provided, and demonstrate cost-effectiveness. OTDA realizes that providing multiple services will increase costs, so programs that provide a range of services will likely be granted more funding than those that provide one service.