



**Request for Information (RFI)  
Efforts to Improve Placement Stability and Permanency**

**February 21, 2024**

**PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS or “Department”) is seeking information from current licensed and contracted Child Placing Agencies and Group Care facilities with the Department about innovative efforts and strategies that will improve placement identification, stability, and timely permanency for children placed in out-of-home care.

Over the last few years, the Department has worked diligently to develop and enhance a continuum of trauma-informed, family-centered, strengths-based, and culturally responsive services to support children, youth, and families. While these efforts have positively impacted the individuals we serve, challenges persist around identifying and securing appropriate placements for children and youth in the state's custody and stabilizing young people within these placements. These challenges are present across all placement types and settings but are particularly noticeable for specific populations and children and youth with special needs. Contributing to these challenges are the limited availability of foster parents (particularly for teenagers), the limited availability of therapeutic foster parents for all age groups, but especially teenagers, limited availability of congregate care programming designed to meet increased treatment needs, and other wraparound services that are known to support overall placement stability.

The Department profoundly understands the intrinsic connection between placement stability and the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth. Research indicates that children who have multiple or unstable placements experience more difficulty forming healthy and meaningful attachments, delayed time to permanency, poorer educational outcomes, and increased behavioral and mental health issues (Casey Family Programs, 2023). Conversely, stable placements demonstrably have the positive impact of providing children with consistency, predictability, and stability that promotes healthy and prosocial attachments with caring adults, which help children thrive. Moreover, children who experience more stable placements and less frequent moves have been shown to have improved timeliness to permanency.

As part of its continuous quality improvement efforts and commitment to ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth, the Department routinely examines the stability of placements. One way the Department evaluates stability is by looking at the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care, with placement moves being defined as changes in the specific placement of children. A longitudinal analysis using this measurement found an increase in move rates from 4.61 (FFY 20-21) to 6.07 (FFY 22-23).

Recognizing this increase over time and the need for timely action, the Department developed a monthly report that captures more than two placements in a month, providing real-time, up-to-date placement move data. These reports show an upward trend in moves, with 14% (June 2023) to 19% (November 2023)

experiencing three or more placements during the respective review periods. While the Department is engaged in internal activities focused on holistically supporting children and families, it is a part of a larger ecosystem, of which its providers play a vital part.

By strategically investing in our current providers, we can support them in taking innovative approaches that will help promote greater stability and move children more quickly to permanency. Through targeted recruitment and training of foster parents for specialized populations, developing adaptive and responsive wraparound services, and proactively partnering with families and kin to promote timely reunification and permanency, we can improve our system and effectively meet the needs of the children and young people we serve.

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**

This RFI is an information gathering and market research tool, not a formal solicitation to fulfill a specific requirement (such as in a “Request for Proposals” document) and therefore, no contract will be awarded by the SCDSS from this RFI. However, SCDSS may use the information gathered from submissions to this RFI to develop grants with the goal of achieving the changes described in section 1 of this RFI.

### **General Information**

**Describe in detail information about recruitment, service array, and permanency activities.**

1. Provide information about targeted recruitment of foster parents for the following special populations both therapeutic and non-therapeutic foster families:
  - a) Teens
  - b) Large Sibling Groups
  - c) LGBTQIA+
  - d) Medically Fragile
  - e) Young People with total care needs
2. Provide information about Service Array Development and Modification:
  - a) Innovative wraparound services to support placement stability (e.g., sitter services for when children are unable to go to school, etc.)
  - b) Services to improve stabilization of placement for children and youth who experience two or more moves in a 30-day period
  - c) Innovative wraparound and supportive services for kinship caregivers
  - d) Innovative reunification services and activities for families
3. Provide Innovative Permanency Activities:
  - a) Promoting and actively engaging in kin-finding activities
  - b) Promoting and actively engaging families for reunification/permanency
  - c) Actively engaging with current providers to provide a comprehensive continuum of supports and services to stabilize placements
4. Develop, enhance, and implement services to coordinate, facilitate and/or carry out visitation of children and youth under the provider’s care (whether CPA or group care) with their parents no less than bi-monthly and/or siblings no less than monthly and document execution of visitation in the CAIP portal.

5. Specialized Foster Parent and Staff Training:
  - a) Training and skill-building to enhance the ability of foster parents/staff to support maintaining stability of youth who have experienced trauma.
  - b) Training and skill-building to enhance the ability of foster parents/staff to address youth behavior to prevent disruptions when crises occur.
  - c) Training for staff on areas of need to reduce discharges or placement changes related to youth maladaptive behavior and promote prosocial behavior and adaptive coping strategies.
6. Activities to enhance and augment provider policy and foster parent acceptance/allowance of safe cell phone use for teens.
  - a) To include policy modification, training, and incorporation of best practices around safe cell phone use.
7. Provide information about supportive concrete needs
  - a) Supportive equipment, goods, and services that promote permanency and placement stabilization (e.g., furniture for a calming/therapeutic room, foster closet (clothing), care bags, and other supportive needs).

### **Program Description**

1. Describe your agency's plan to implement the activities and services related to this RFI.
2. Describe your agency's collaboration with existing service providers, community stakeholders, SCDSS, and how working collaboratively with other community agencies will support placement stability and permanency.
3. Describe your strategies to promote family engagement, including creative outreach methods to engage families as part of any engagement efforts.

### **Components, Functions and Budget**

#### **Describe in detail the components, functions, and budget:**

1. Describe the system your agency will use to collect demographic and data around services provided and plan to evaluate its success in responding to the identified needs of the youth served.
  - a.1.1. Provide information around what data your agency currently collects around placement stability.
2. Describe how you will track outcomes of children and families who receive the services you have described in your response.
3. Describe how your organization will approach continuous quality improvement throughout the project period, and how you will measure and report the results.
4. Describe the budget your organization has requested by listing an itemized amount for all activities including training, concrete needs, or both to improve placement identification and stability and timely permanency for children placed in out-of-home care.

### **Training and Support Services**

1. Describe all training and other supportive services needed to improve placement stability and increase timely permanency.

## AMENDMENTS

ALL CHANGES TO THIS RFI WILL BE MADE BY THE SCDSS PROCUREMENT OFFICE IN THE FORM OF WRITTEN AMENDMENTS THAT WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO THIS DOCUMENT. AMENDMENTS TO THIS RFI WILL BE POSTED ON THE DSS WEBSITE.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The state shall not be liable for any costs incurred by the contractor in connection with the preparation and submission of any response to this RFI.

All responses and accompanying documentation submitted will become the property of the state and will not be returned.

## ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Listed below is the estimated timeline for the RFI. Dates and times indicated below are **estimated** and may be changed at the discretion of the Procurement Manager.

- a) February 21, 2024 – Release of RFI
- b) March 13, 2024 - 5:00 p.m. EST – Closing date for RFI

## RESPONSE

Interested contractors should send a letter of interest and responses to the Procurement Manager assigned indicated below. Responses may be emailed to the Procurement Director, Shaneka Oliver at [dssprocurement@dss.sc.gov](mailto:dssprocurement@dss.sc.gov) no later than 5 PM March 13, 2024.

Responses are limited to 10 pages for the narrative. Single spacing is permissible. Responses should follow the headings:

- a) General Information
- b) Program Description
- c) Components, Functions and Budget
- d) Training and Support Services

**THE ABOVE REFERENCED INFORMATION IS THE ONLY INFORMATION REQUESTED FOR THIS RFI AT THIS TIME.**

**REMINDER: THIS IS NOT A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP).**

**DO NOT SEND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, SUCH AS BROCHURES, ETC. UNLESS REQUESTED BY THE PROCUREMENT MANAGER.**