

Robert P. Astorino  
County Executive

Department of Social Services

Kevin P. Mahon  
Commissioner

**Date:** April 27, 2010

**To:** The Honorable Board of Acquisition and Contract

**From:** Kevin P. Mahon  
Commissioner of Social Services

**Subject:** Authority for the County of Westchester to enter into an agreement with Westchester Institute for Human Development (“WIHD”) for the provision of professional and technical services necessary to maintain and update the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 for an amount not to exceed \$134,976 payable pursuant to an approved budget and subject to appropriation.

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Authority is requested for the County of Westchester to enter into an agreement with Westchester Institute for Human Development for the provision of professional and technical services necessary to maintain and update the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual. The term of the proposed agreement will be for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 for an amount not to exceed \$134,976 payable pursuant to an approved budget and subject to appropriation.

This contract will **serve a public purpose** by providing all levels of DSS staff with immediate access to an integrated and centralized resource for all policies and directives set forth by federal, state and local authorities which would allow them to provide services to Westchester County families and children more effectively, in an efficient and timely manner.

**The goals and objectives** of the proposed agreement are to continue providing professional and technical services necessary to maintain and update the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual as listed below. This requires daily work as new directives are handed down from all levels of government, including changes to local policy, procedures and practice on an ongoing basis and Manual staff must write and integrate that material into the website and add supporting links, text, and forms to make the new material immediately accessible to DSS staff.

Additional objectives for the Manual include:

- providing timely updates to reflect new policies and procedures being implemented
- continuing to create forms that may be filled out online, as requested by DSS staff

- developing custom keyword Google search result displays to ensure that users are directed to the appropriate online resources in the Manual
- monitoring and reporting on DSS staff use of the Manual
- communicating on an ongoing basis with all levels of personnel to inform of changes in the content, functionality, and resources available via the online Manual website
- supporting continued hosting of the DSS Manual website at WIHD
- providing daily technological support and assistance with trouble-shooting to DSS Program Office

Having a comprehensive and current Policies and Procedures Manual benefits the Department for multiple reasons. For one thing, it enables staff to immediately access protocols and “best practice” procedures, thereby improving their ability to care for children and families. This, in turn, minimizes liability and helps assure that the standards of practice are met universally across all program areas and all district offices.

**The goals and objectives are in the best interests of the County in terms of fiscal responsibility** as the Department of Social Services explored the feasibility of using Child Welfare Program staff in the maintenance and upkeep of the Manual while having County Department of Information Technology host the Manual on their server. However, the cost of hiring two full time DSS staff solely dedicated to the tasks now performed by WIHD would cost the County over \$140,890 at current salary levels, not including fringe benefits. This estimate also does not include any expenses associated with County Information Technology personnel. Thus, the cost of salary alone for DSS staff exceeds the cost of contracting the service to WIHD by \$5,914. The amount requested reflects a decrease of \$15,200 from the previous year as a result of cost savings.

Furthermore, from a fiscal perspective, the Manual, with its thorough and easily-understood text, allows caseworkers to independently research questions, reducing costly time spent in supervision. The process of seeking information in the Manual will only become easier as Manual staff adds to the ever-growing list of search terms indexed into the customized Google search engine and as users receive ongoing tips on using the website from such features as the “Message Board” and the enhanced “Did You Know” feature. The nearly 200 online forms currently on the Manual also promote efficiency as these forms can be completed, saved, e-mailed and printed without the user having to leave his/her desk. New forms are formatted and uploaded to the site on a regular basis.

**The negative consequence of not entering into this contract** with WIHD would mean that the Manual would become an obsolete resource containing information that may have at one time been current, but that is no longer reflective of the very latest federal, state, and local policies. Thus, managers, supervisors, and caseworkers would be unable to rely on the Manual (as they do now) for direction. There would be no central repository for the most up-to-date Department policies, and staff would be scrambling to identify the agreed upon procedures for handling a multitude of situations. Hours in supervision would increase, as caseworkers would once again be reliant upon more frequent face-to-face interactions with their supervisors for answers to basic questions that can currently be located easily in the Manual.

The creation of the Manual was the direct result of the grand jury investigation held about three years ago related to Westchester County child fatalities. It was also in response to the recommendation of The Child Welfare League of America.

**The goals and objectives will be monitored** using the performance measurement indicators developed by the department and approved by the County Budget Office. The program office will be responsible for setting the milestones and tracking their achievements.

Currently, an average of 165 members of DSS Staff and contractors use the Manual on a monthly basis, accessing the site an average of 672 times per month to view an average of 7000 pages of text per month. Efforts will continue to be made to increase the number of users even further. There is no limit to the number of DSS professionals who can access the site. Additionally, some contract agencies have been provided with access to the Manual in an effort to promote consistent, universal practice between DSS and its community partners.

Approximately 11 policy updates were made to the Manual each month during the 2009-2010 contract year. In addition to this, approximately 77 forms able to be filled out online were created and uploaded to the website. WIHD staff responds to requests for technical assistance, minor changes/additions to the site, and general queries related to the website – usually within two to three hours of the initial request and as of March 31, 2010, WIHD provided technical assistance to DSS staff over 68 times.

A resolution exempting this agreement from the operation of the Westchester County Procurement Policy has been submitted under separate cover and should be acted on before your Honorable Board considers the attached resolution.

Accordingly, the County of Westchester requests authority to enter into an agreement with WIHD for the purpose stated above.

Approval of the annexed resolution by your Honorable Board is respectfully requested.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 2009-2010 - JGMARY MERRILL SECRETARY

## RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Commissioner of Social Services, be it hereby:

**RESOLVED**, that the County of Westchester is hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with Westchester Institute for Human Development for the provision of professional and technical services necessary to maintain and update the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 for an amount not to exceed \$134,976 payable pursuant to an approved budget; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this Agreement is subject to County Appropriation; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this Agreement is also subject to further financial analysis of the impact of any New York State Budget (the "State Budget") proposed and adopted during the term of this Agreement. The County shall retain the right, upon the occurrence of any release by the Governor of a proposed State Budget and/or the adoption of a State Budget or amendments thereto, and for a reasonable period of time after such release(s) or adoption(s), to conduct an analysis of the impacts of any such State Budget on County finances. After such analysis, the County shall retain the right to either terminate this Agreement or to renegotiate the amounts and rates approved herein. If the County subsequently offers to pay a reduced amount to the Contractor, then the Contractor shall have the right to terminate this Agreement upon reasonable prior written notice; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the County Executive or his authorized designee is authorized to execute all documents necessary to effectuate the purposes of this resolution.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 5-20-2010  
COUNTY CLERK  
COUNTY SECRETARY

Account to be  
Charged/Credited

	Fund	Dept	Major Program, Program & Phase Or Unit	Object/ Sub-Object	Trust Account	Dollars
2010	101	22	8900	5960	-----	\$67,488
2011	101	22	8900	5960	-----	\$67,488

Budget Funding Year(s): 2010-2011  
(must match resolution)

Start Date: 7/1/10

End Date: 6/30/11

Funding Source

\$134,976  
(must match resolution)

Tax Dollars 41%  
State Aid: 41%  
Federal Aid: 18%  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 5-20-2010 - JOMARY VEIRY SECRETARY