



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: Resolution to exempt from compliance with the Westchester County Procurement Policy pursuant to Section 3 (a) (xxi), an agreement between the County of Westchester and 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

Authority is requested to exempt from compliance with the Westchester County Procurement Policy pursuant to Section 3 (a) (xxi), an agreement between the County of Westchester and 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.

In light of the fact that the Department of Social Services has been contracting with Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD) to provide professional assistance on matters related to the Department's mandated preventive and child protective programs as well as the foster care and adoption programs, Westchester Institute for Human Development is in a most advantageous position to deliver the consulting services necessary to maintain and update the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual as well as data analysis and program evaluation. Westchester Institute for Human Development has gained extensive working knowledge of the Department's programs and policies. In addition, Westchester Institute for Human Development has demonstrated the ability to develop exemplary program materials and make complex "research" tools simple for non-research professionals to use.

This contract will **serve a public purpose** by providing all levels of DSS staff with immediate access to the latest information on the standards set by the federal, state, and local levels of government, 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. 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 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 currently can 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 eleven 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.

Therefore, based on the expertise, experience and familiarity of the contractor in working with this program and the long-standing relationship the contractor has with the County, it is proposed that the best interests of the County would be served by entering into this agreement with Westchester Institute for Human Development for continued professional and technical services. This recommendation is made pursuant to Section 3(a) (xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy. A separate resolution has been submitted requesting authority to enter into this agreement.

Your Honorable Board's approval of the annexed resolution is respectfully requested

RESOLUTION

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

RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 3(a) (xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy, it is hereby determined that application of the procedural requirements, including the necessity of soliciting proposals, is neither cost effective nor expedient and accordingly not in the best interest of the County of Westchester in connection with the procurement of professional and technical services from Westchester Institute for Human Development for the purpose of updating and maintaining the on-line Child Welfare DSS Manual; 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.

Account to be

Charged/Credited

Fund	Dept	Major Program, Program & Phase Or Unit	Object/ Sub-Object	Trust Account	Dollars
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Budget Funding Year(s): N/A Start Date: N/A End Date: N/A
(must match resolution)

Funding Source Tax Dollars: N/A
 State Aid: N/A
\$ N/A Federal Aid: N/A
 (must match resolution) Other:

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT 5-20-2008 JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY