

Foster Care Licensing and Kinship Licensing

Questions and Responses

PROPOSALS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 3, 2025 BY 5:00 PM CDT

RFP #13688

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Q1: Section 3.2.2 states the selected vendor will be required to: Ensure staff meets qualification guidelines of a bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, sociology, public administration, or other human-service related fields.

- a) Are all staff the vendor provides required to meet these requirements? Our understanding is that state CPS staff are not required to have a bachelor's degree at this time.
- b) Can you outline additional degrees that would be considered "human-service relate fields?" Would criminal justice, nursing, counseling, education, and other similar degrees be acceptable?

A1: Staff who complete the family assessment and home study must meet the qualification outlined in the question. Other human-service related fields could include criminal justice or counseling. In addition it may be acceptable for an individual to have a related human services degrees with experience in social services field that would be acceptable. Individuals completing other support work such as trainer, supervisor, or coordinator should have experience and knowledge associated with the role they will be assigned.

Q2: It appears there are approximately 75-80 inquiries per month based on historical averages. And there is an expectation of training 20-30 foster parents at each cohort (24 trainings per month at a minimum). That's a conversion rate of approximately 25%. Is there any information regarding why the conversion rate has been so low?

A2: The 75-80 inquiries is the number of individuals who reach out to learn more about foster care licensing (initial contacts). Over the last two years, an average of 68% of initial contacts chose to not pursue licensure after the first communication explaining about foster care licensing because they said they are longer interested or did not respond back.

More detailed data is gathered from families who begin the licensure process, but then choose not to follow through with licensure. Of those that withdraw after they begin the licensure process, approximately 44% communicate there is a change in their family situation, another 14% communicate that it is no longer the right time, 14% simply do not responds to additional communications, 5% state they no longer are interested after learning more about foster care.

Q3: Is there any data on how many foster parents do not renew each year, and why they choose not to renew? Is there any data on which areas of the state experience the highest shortage of foster care parents?

A3: For the last fiscal year, the two main reasons families close their license are due to family changes (39%) or because they have adopted a child (33%). Other reasons include the family moved out of state, health issues, no reason provided, or difficulty with fostering.

The highest need for additional foster homes are in the western and central region of South Dakota.

Q4: Section 3.7 says that OLA and CPS currently work together to identify emergency placement requests. Additionally, it says the vendor will work with OLA and CPS to do placement matching. How does the state anticipate working with the vendor on placement matching in emergency situations?

Placement Support –

- Will the vendor be expected to provide 24/7 on-call support for placement needs and crisis response?
- Will requests for placement come directly to the vendor from CPS or OLA?
- What is OLA's role in placement compared to the proposed vendor's role?
- Does the vendor have the authority to make placement determinations?
- What is the vendor's responsibility if no placement is immediately available?

What is the percentage of placement support requests that occur outside of typical business hours?

*A4: The Office of Licensing and Accreditation is seeking support for non-emergency placements and emergency requests **during business hours**. When an emergency placement request is submitted to the Office of Licensing and Accreditation **during business hours**, as outlined in section 3.7, the vendor will need to ensure staff assigned to placement responsibilities are available to assist in contacting foster families.*

In section 3.7 of the RFP, is a request for placement coordinator to gather information from CPS and then assign the placement to the appropriate OLA or vendor staff. The vendor staff and OLA staff will need to work together to identify placement coverage. The responsibilities for placement are the same for OLA staff as they are for vendor staff when they are on placement coverage. OLA and the vendor do not make placement determinations, only recommendations to CPS. The vendor would be responsible to continue to work with CPS staff regarding placements until an immediate placement decision is made. There may be occasions that placement work may go beyond normal business hours, but it is not a day-to-day occurrence. As a reminder, staff will not have placement responsibilities every day/week.

Q5: How many children are in need of placement/support each year?

A5: Statewide in the last six months, OLA received just under 430 placement requests from CPS.

Q6: Section 3.8 indicates that the state is in the process of transitioning to the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents. What is the anticipated timeline for the implementation of the new curriculum?

A6: The goal is to transition to the new curriculum by June 1, 2025. Families that start training before June 1, 2025 will finish training using the existing curriculum.

Q7: Section 3.12.1 states the vendor will be required to use their own system(s) to collect and track all data outlined in the reporting requirements section until the OLA system for foster care licensing is completed. Is the expectation that all data outlined in the reporting requirements will be able to be extracted/reported from OLA once it is complete?

A7: Once the OLA system is completed for foster care, all data required will be collected in the OLA system and reports will be available.

Q8: Can everything from Sections 3.1 – 3.13 be piloted in one or two areas of the state before expanding to a state-wide model?

a) If so, do they have preferred target areas for a pilot

A8: Only the following scope of work can be implemented in a targeted area as a pilot. The preferred location is Rapid City, Pierre (central SD), or Sioux Falls, but the State is open to other areas if proposed.

- 3.6 Post-licensure renewal
- 3.7 Placement support

Q9: Does the state have a Master Trainer for the National Training and Development Curriculum, for Foster and Adaptive Parenting Training that is able to train Vendor staff? Or, should vendors anticipate expenses to get staff trained in this model?

A9: The curriculum has been tailored to meet SD needs and requirements. The State does not have a master trainer, but state staff have participated in the training through an opportunity with Spaulding for Children. Currently there is a wait list for new Train the Trainer session with Spaulding for Children. The vendor should anticipate time and expenses to work with the state to learn about the state tailored NTDC curriculum.

Q10: Is there any data or public information to illustrate the geographic breakdown of where existing foster families and kinship families are located across the state as well as a breakdown of where CPS referrals are coming from, and where foster family inquiries are being initiated?

A10: The largest need for foster families are in the western and central region of SD. There are more children coming into DSS custody than there are resources to support the children in those regions. The largest number of licensed foster families are located on the eastern side of SD. Inquiries are broken down by OLA areas, the largest number of inquiries last year were from Rapid City and Sioux Falls. The smallest number of inquires last year was from the middle of SD.

Q11: Page 8 states: "Pre-licensure training can be used to inform the home study, but it is not dependent upon completion of home study. With that being said, as required in administrative rule, pre-licensure training must be completed before issuing the license."

- Does this mean home studies can be completed and submitted without training being completed?
- If training is not completed, whose responsibility is it to monitor that the family complete training?

A11: Home Studies cannot be completed or submitted prior to the training being complete. There is a shared responsibility between the staff assigned to complete the home-study and trainers to monitor and encourage families to complete the training. The State is suggesting that a model with separate roles for trainer and home-study specialist may work best to achieve the goals, but the State is also open to other proposals.

Q12:Page 10, 3.3.1: How does the statement, “Interact with the public sharing SFT recruitment needs” differ from bullet point above it stating, “Participate in recruiting events...”?

A12: There is not a difference between the two lines. Both speak to participating in recruitment efforts.

Q13: Page 18 includes the statement “the ICPC kinship home study is similar to the kinship home study and timeframes will be the same.” Can you clarify what timeframe the ICPC home study will be the same as?

A13: The ICPC home study would be the same as the kinship home study with the timeframe being 30 business days from the request.

Q14: Approved reasons for extensions to home study completion are listed to only include delays with background checks. Experience with home study work shows that families often have other personal reasons that delay home study completion. How will these situations be managed and/or reported?

A14: The vendor will be required to track and report what type of documentation is not completed. Those completing the home-study should be proactively working with the family to avoid delays in completing the homestudy within the required timeframe. The proposal should include how the vendor is going to work with the family and manage documentation needed to limit the number of extensions needed.

Q15: What are the differentiation of roles/tasks between OLA staff and vendor staff with home study renewals, placement support, and recruitment/retention?

- How will duties be shared with the vendor in each of these areas (renewals, placement support, and recruitment/retention)?
- Who will determine roles and assignments between OLA and the vendor for each of these areas (renewals, placement support, and recruitment/retention)?

A15: The OLA staff and vendor staff will be assigned the same roles/tasks for renewal, placement support, and recruitment/retention. The State will work with vendor to assign a specific case load for renewals. To ensure a successful transition, the vendor may propose to pilot renewal and placement work in specific region before transitioning to a statewide model. Vendor staff will also need to dedicate time to support placement. The State will work with the vendor to ensure a placement responsibilities between OLA staff and the vendor staff are covered for each CPS local office.

Q16: Page 13 under section 3.6 states: “If fingerprints are submitted with pending results the vendor can approve the annual renewal.” Will the vendor have the authority to approve licensing renewals?

A16: The vendor will submit the licensing renewal to OLA for approval.

Q17: Regarding the LMS development: Will there be a built-in tracking system for NTDC? Does SD Learn have the capacity to track attendance at training sessions and generate reports?

A17: It is OLA understanding that SD Learn has the ability to track attendance and generate reports.

Q18: Page 9 identifies that OLA will be conducting performance reviews of the vendor’s performance.

- What are the categories/performance areas included in the performance reviews?
- How often will performance reviews be completed?
- Will these be completed in regard to individual vendor staff or as a contract?

A18: The performance review will focus on the vendor’s ability to carryout responsibilities outlined in the contract on an annual basis. OLA will utilize the data reported by the vendor, gather feedback from trainings conducted, an feedback from families to evaluate the vendors performance.

Q19: Page 10, 3.4.1 states: “Approximately one week after the initial call, schedule and conduct a home visit with the family to assist the family in deciding to move forward with licensure.” This does not match the outcome identified on page 21 – 3.13 Service Level Agreement that “95% of all initial home visits will take place within 14 days of the inquiry call”. Can you explain the difference in timelines? Will the vendor be required to track both the one week and 14 day timelines?

A19: The goal is to schedule within approximately one week, however, to accommodate families schedules, the Service Level Agreement provided additional time of up to 14 days. The vendor will be required to document the date of the initial call and the date of the home visit to determine if the service level agreement was made. Service Level Agreements may be negotiated during contact negotiations.

Q20: Page 12 states “The estimated staff needed does not include staff to conduct training.” Can you explain where training staff fit into the staff outline provided in the RFP? Is OLA wanting training staff to be separate from licensing staff?

A20: To support implementation of the new licensing process, OLA is recommending staff conducting training are different staff than those who complete the other licensing responsibilities (initial home-study, renewal, placement support). The State is open to other options if the proposal explains how this proposed method will achieve the goals and requirements outlined in the RFP. An individual completing training could possibly support recruitment and retention events. As outlined in section 3.2, training staff were not included in the estimated number of staff to support initial home-study, renewal, or placement responsibility, but should be included in the proposal along with other personnel necessary to meet the requirements of the RFP.

Q21:Page 13: 3.6.1 – “Address any non-compliance issues with the family within two business days upon assignment.”

- How will the vendor be informed of non-compliance?
- Does the vendor have decision making ability in regard to non-compliance issues and continued licensure/placement?
- Will the vendor be providing this level of support for all families, or will this be split with OLA? If there is shared responsibility, who will determine who responds?

A21: The vendor will be notified by either CPS or OLA staff of any reported non-compliance issues. The vendor staff assigned to a family will be required to investigate the situation and make a determination regarding if the family needs to be place on a compliance plan. Other more serious issues that may lead to a corrective action plan or suspension will need to be staffed with OLA. The vendor will provide ongoing support for their assigned families. OLA staff and the vendor staff will not be assigned the same families.

Q22:What is the goal of vendor staff being required to use state issued email, calendars, and Teams systems?

A22: Using a state e-mail/calendar allows OLA and the vendor to easily see and determine availability and coordinate licensure and/or placement work. Microsoft Teams is used to access shared documents that more than one person needs access to an possibly needs to update at the same time.

Q23: Will the state provide IT equipment to ensure vendor compatibility with required email, calendar, and Teams systems?

A23: No, IT equipment will not be made available. The State will request the vendor to have a Non-State user account that provides vendor staff with a state e-mail that they can access outlook, calendar, and Teams on their own device.

Q24: What are the targets and percentages outlined in the SLA based upon?

A24: The targets are based upon timeframes or expectations outlined in processes. The State would like to see the vendor meet 100% of the timeframes, but the target 95% of the time in a quarter allows for unique situations in which the vendor may not be able to meet the target for each specific case.

Q25: Regarding 1.1 "The Department is open to proposals that include partnerships with another agency to carry out specific areas of the scope of work such as pre-licensure and post-licensure training or scope of work within a regional area. The Department may accept a proposal for a specific scope of work such as foster care training. If proposals are submitted that only address a specific scope of work, the Department will evaluate the proposals for that specific scope of work, however, a key factor to the award will be ensuring all scope of work outlined in the RFP is addressed across various proposals."

Does this mean we are required to bid for the entire scope of work and can use a partner to fulfill specific parts of it, or can we submit a bid for only portions of the RFP?

A25: The State is open to bids that include a partner to fulfill all of the scope of work or the vendor may submit a bid for a specific scope of work within the RFP. If a vendor submits a bid for a specific scope of work, the State must first determine if all the scope of work is addressed across other proposals when making award decisions.

Q26: Is there an overall budget for this scope of work?

A26: Vendors should submit a budget aligned to the scoped of work. Proposed budgets are a part of the evaluation.

Q27: If there is an overall budget, is there an estimate by task?

A27: Proposed budgets are a part of the evaluation process and will be evaluated based on the scope of work outlined in the proposal.

Q28: Should Attachments A, B, or C be submitted with the proposal?

A28: No, vendors do not need to submit a completed attachment A, B, or C with the proposal.

Q29: Would the department consider extending the proposal due date?

A29: No

Q30: Is there an incumbent for all scopes of work in this RFP?

A30: There is a current incumbent for a foster care preliensure and training and kinship home-studies. This RFP includes changes and additional scope of work as compared to the last release of a similar RFPs.

Q31: Does the steering committee meet virtually or in person?

A31: The steering committee meets both virtually and in person.