

# Federal Grant Application Request

## Department of Human Services

### Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in Foster Care

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**Analyst:** Laurie Byerly

**Request:** Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the Department of Health and Human Services in the amount of up to \$400,000 per year for five years (\$2 million total), to help recruit resource families for children in foster care.

**Recommendation:** Approve the request.

**Analysis:** The Administration for Children and Families – Children’s Bureau, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, plans to award eight grants for demonstration projects to develop programs to recruit resource families for children in foster care. Proposed projects are to focus on comprehensive programs that recruit, train, and support foster and adoptive families that reflect the characteristics of the children in foster care awaiting placement. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is requesting permission to apply for the grant in the full amount of \$400,000 per year for five years (\$2 million total); the grant application is due June 10, 2013.

If awarded, work under the grant would likely begin by September 30, 2013. The grant does not have any cost sharing or matching requirements. While applicants must propose a plan for project sustainability after the grant ends, there is no specific level of state spending to be maintained.

DHS is still refining details and budget, but consistent with the grant announcement, envisions the five-year project being organized into a 12-month planning phase (Phase 1) and a 48-month implementation phase (Phase 2). Phase 1 would include data collection and analysis, assessment of current system characteristics, collaborator identification, exploration of barriers, and development of a Phase 2 plan. The federal agency has to approve the Phase 2 plan, which must cover several minimum criteria. These range from using a specific customer service model to activities expediting permanency, such as dual licensure of foster and adoptive homes.

DHS has already identified a potential partner, Susan Quash-Mah, who has experience working on a similar demonstration project specific to Native American children. Along with supporting her contract, grant funds would be used to pay for a limited duration position (grant coordinator). DHS also expects to have costs for technical assistance, data gathering, geo-mapping, travel, training, project evaluation, and support to the local communities.

If the grant is awarded and additional expenditure limitation or position authority is necessary, a budget adjustment can be made in the 2014 Legislative Session or during the interim.

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.

**Motion: I move that the Joint Committee on Ways and Means approve the Department of Human Services’ submission of a federal grant application to the Department of Health and Human Services to help recruit resource families for children in foster care.**



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Department of Human Services

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May 8, 2013



The Honorable Richard Devlin, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Peter Buckley, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street NE  
H-178, State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301-4048

**RE: Replacement Letter - Request to apply- Cooperative Funding Agreement- Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System HHS-2013-ACF-ACYF-CO-0593**

Dear Co-Chairs:

### **Nature of Request**

The Department of Human Services (DHS) requests permission to apply for the Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System HHS-2013-ACF-ACYF-CO-0593 Cooperative Agreement has been posted with the Children's Bureau. This is a 5-year Cooperative Agreement with no match funding required. The expected award is approximately \$400,000 per year for 5 years for a total of \$2,000,000. The application is due June 10, 2013. The estimated award date is 9/27/13 and the estimated start date is 9/30/13.

The intent of the grant is to implement comprehensive, multi-faceted diligent recruitment programs for resource families, including kinship, foster, concurrent, and adoptive families for children and youth served by public child welfare agencies; effectively identify, engage and support resource families as a means of improving permanency outcomes and building lasting connections for children in foster care. The funding is available through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

## **Agency Action**

One of goals for DHS is to promote safety, permanency and wellbeing for children in substitute care. One of the ways in which that is accomplished is by recruiting, studying and supporting resource families that can be properly matched with children in the foster care system. Currently, plans for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families are carried out at the local branch level by casework staff that carry overwhelming workloads. As a result, this effort is not always prioritized.

A 2010 Children and Family Services Review, done by the Administration for Children and Families, found a lack of stabilization of foster care placements due to a scarcity of appropriate placement resources that could best meet the children's needs, particularly for children with special care needs or severe behavior problems. It was determined that placements were inherently unstable because they were temporary shelters or emergency placements and that caretakers were unwilling, unable, or unprepared to handle children's behavioral issues.

All recent research findings support the need to develop more effective programs in support of placing children and youth with families who can provide permanent family connections and to develop a plan for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. This is done by analyzing the characteristics of the children in foster care in order to formulate a diligent recruitment plan with specific strategies for different communities based on the demographics of the children in foster care from that community.

This funding opportunity will allow us to work within existing efforts to improve several areas:

- 1) Implement comprehensive, multi-faceted diligent recruitment programs (general, targeted, and child-specific) for resource families, including kinship, foster, concurrent, and adoptive families for children and youth served by public child welfare agencies as a means of improving permanency outcomes;
- 2) Integrate the diligent recruitment program with other agency programs, including foster care case planning and permanency planning processes, to facilitate active concurrent planning activities;
- 3) Demonstrate the capacity to use this project as a transformative platform for improved system response to permanency, incorporating changes at the

- policy and practice levels, and embracing a philosophy of permanency beginning at the entry in the child welfare system;
- 4) Evaluate the implementation of the comprehensive diligent recruitment programs to document processes and potential linkages between diligent recruitment strategies and improved outcomes; and
  - 5) Develop identifiable sites that other states, counties and tribes seeking to implement improved diligent recruitment methods can look to for guidance, insight, and possible replication.

The goal would be to begin with a 12-month Planning and Strategy Development Phase (Phase I) in order to build from current strengths and address barriers and challenges at the policy, procedure, and practice levels to ensure systemic impact and permanency outcomes improvements for children and youth in foster care as well as a 48-month Implementation Phase (Phase II). In years 2-5, (Phase II) we will carry out program-specific activities.

The department is working with Susan Quash-Mah Ph.D. and her non-profit organization, The Polished Word, LLC, based out of Eugene, Oregon. Ms. Quash-Mah has previous success with a federal grant for recruiting rural parents for Indian Children. We plan to contract with Ms. Quash-Mah to utilize some of her strategies from the previous work and develop more broad-based strategies for rural areas in Oregon. This would be a joint application with DHS being the lead and Ms. Quash-Mah as a Co-Principal Investigator. The grant funding will allow the department to hire 1 FTE in a Limited Duration position and to contract with Ms. Quash-Mah as the Co-Principal investigator to successfully implement this grant. Additional funds will be used for community-based services, activities and for purchasing of technical assistance needs that may arise during the operation of the grant.

There is no expectation that the state will continue to fund the limited duration position or the contractors after the life of the grant. The activities during this grant cycle, focus on sustainability of this work beyond the availability of funds by this grant by training and supporting and developing tools that would assist local offices to continue this work, as well as by potentially changing policy/procedure to reflect the need for this work to be carried out.

### **Action Requested**

The Department of Human Services requests permission to apply for the Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System Funding

Opportunity Agreement HHS-2013-ACF-ACYF-CO-0593 from the Department of Health and Human Services/Administration of Children, Youth and Families and accept the award if the state's application is successful. If awarded, the department will return to a future Emergency Board or Ways and Means Committee for needed position authority or expenditure limitation.

**Legislation Affected**

None

For additional information please call Kevin George, Well Being Program Manager (503) 945-5987, [kevin.george@state.or.us](mailto:kevin.george@state.or.us).

Sincerely,



Eric Luther Moore  
DHS Chief Financial Officer

cc: Laurie Byerly  
Blake Johnson  
Kate Nass  
George Naughton  
Ken Rocco