

Questions and Answers

RFP: 3rd Model Family Representation Office Grant

Date Posted: November 21, 2023

- 1) **Question:** Regarding “Section III: Who is Eligible to Apply for this Request for Proposals” on page 10 of the RFP, our county received funding under the Upstate Model Family Representation Office Grant RFP issued by ILS on May 24, 2019. Is this current RFP considered an opportunity to apply for renewal funding for that project?

Answer: Yes.

- 2) **Question:** Does this grant have funding to hire social workers, paralegals, investigators, and experts for offices that don’t have these positions exclusively for Article 10s?

Answer: The grant award may be used only for staff (attorneys, social workers, paralegals, investigators, etc.) who represent clients in child welfare matters. For purposes of this RFP, “child welfare” matters include Family Court Act Article 10, foster care placement, termination of parental rights, surrender, and permanency planning matters. Staff funded under this grant award may also represent clients on other Family Court matters directly related to the child welfare matter. Grant funding may not be used for representation unrelated to child welfare representation.

- 3) **Question:** With regard to a 24-hour hotline, how would you structure calls that occur after hours? Would there be funding for contractual services?

Answer: Section V, Subsection II, Part A, Question 14 of the RFP requires applicants to describe how potential CPS investigation clients will be identified and lists some examples. It is up to the applicant county to specify the mechanism(s) that will be used to identify and intake potential clients during the child welfare investigation stage of a child welfare matter.

- 4) **Question:** Are counties that are currently receiving the First or Second Upstate Family Defense (Child Welfare) Quality Improvement & Caseload Reduction Grants eligible for the Third Upstate Model Office grant?

Answer: Yes.

- 5) **Question:** Will all questions and answers be posted on the 24th? Or are they posted after submission?

Answer: All questions and answers will be posted on or before November 24, 2023.

- 6) **Question:** Is it possible for more than one county to join in submitting a proposal? If so, do the counties have to be from the same ILS region? Or can we submit a proposal as a geographic region?

Answer: As set forth in Section V of the RFP, ILS will consider proposals that involve more than one county collaborating to host a Model Office. The proposal must identify the lead county responsible for oversight of the administration of the grant and its reporting requirements. Proposals that include collaboration among two or more counties do not need to adhere to regional designations used by ILS for other RFPs or the designations the ILS Criminal Defense Representation Unit is using for administrative purposes.

- 7) **Question:** Must the Interdisciplinary Team include a social worker, or may that team member’s function, including assessment of the strengths and needs of the parent and family, providing case and crisis management, and accessing supports and resources be met by a qualified professional(s) who is not a social worker? Third Upstate Model Family Representation Office Grant, Section I(A) “Interdisciplinary and Holistic Representation” p. 4-5.

Answer: As set forth in Section V, Subsection II, Part A, Question 21 of the RFP, applicants will be scored based on the interdisciplinary team model described in the RFP, including a description of the roles and working relationships among the proposed staff. It is up to the applicant county to delineate the composition of the Model Office staff that it thinks will best meet the goals and objectives of this RFP. As closely as practical, applicants should design a proposal that reflects the best practices identified in the ILS’ *Standards for Parental Representation in State Intervention Matters*, referenced in the RFP.

- 8) **Question:** Throughout the document, the RFP refers to representation by staff. Can Assigned Counsel Program panel attorneys, who are independent contractors, provide representation where the RFP indicates representation by “staff”? Examples:
- “This RFP therefore contemplates that Model Office staff will represent clients from the earliest point ...” Third Upstate Model Family Representation Office Grant, Section I(B) “Timely Access to Counsel” p. 6.
 - “Model Office staff will advise and counsel parents about the exercise of their rights during a CPS Investigation...” Third Upstate Model Family Representation Office Grant, Section I(B) “Investigation Representation” p. 7.

Answer: No. This RFP is seeking proposals for a Model Family Representation *Office* (emphasis added) that provides quality representation to parents in child welfare matters via an interdisciplinary approach that is considered a best practice. (See page 2 of the RFP). For counties that currently provide for the representation of parents in Family Court via an Assigned Counsel Program, this RFP invites these counties to submit proposals that would create an institutional office or contract with one for the representation of parents in child welfare matters.

- 9) **Question:** Section III of the RFP (“Who is Eligible to Apply for this Request for Proposals”) says that a successful awardee “must agree to make good faith efforts to provide ILS with any data or information necessary for ILS to claim federal funding under Title IV-E, including but not limited to Client Identification Numbers (CINs).” Why is that necessary, and what constitutes a “good faith effort” in this context?

Answer: ILS is eligible to seek federal reimbursement for a portion of the funds it disburses through this grant via Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. To successfully claim such reimbursement, ILS must compile documentation from the awardee county including Client Identification Numbers (CINs) associated with the children of the parents receiving legal representation funded by this grant.

ILS recognizes that many providers of mandated parent representation do not routinely receive CINs generated by local Departments of Social Services, but the successful awardee must be willing to actively work with ILS to obtain and share such information and/or to strategize with ILS on overcoming barriers to obtaining and sharing such information.

Please also note that an affirmative agreement to make such good faith efforts is a mandatory prerequisite that must be included in the proposal summary, per Section V, Subsection I of the RFP.