



# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

## ***Expanded School Behavioral Health: School-Based Mental Health Services***

**Release Date: January 12, 2022**

**Pre-Proposal Conference: January 27, 2022 at 10:30 am**

**Proposal Due: February 18, 2022 by 12:00 pm**

**Anticipated Award Notification: April 8, 2022**

**Anticipated Contract Start: July 1, 2022**

### **Issued by:**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc.  
100 South Charles Street, Tower II, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

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# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## ***Expanded School Behavioral Health***

### **I. Overview of the Project**

#### **A. OVERVIEW OF BHSB**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a non-profit organization tasked by Baltimore City to manage the city's public behavioral health system. As such, BHSB serves as the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City. In this role, BHSB envisions a city where people live and thrive in communities that promote and support behavioral health and wellness.

BHSB is committed to enhancing the behavioral health and wellness of individuals, families, and communities through:

- The promotion of behavioral health and wellness prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery;
- The creation and leadership of an integrated network of providers that promotes universal access to comprehensive, data-driven services; and
- Advocacy and leadership of behavioral health-related efforts to align resources, programs, and policy.

BHSB is committed to promoting behavioral health equity in Baltimore City by ensuring that the behavioral health provider network is culturally and linguistically responsive to the diverse populations served; reducing behavioral health care access barriers for populations known to experience discrimination and marginalization; and supporting communities directly to develop services that are responsive to their unique strengths and needs.

#### **B. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT**

*Please read this RFP in its entirety as the scope of services and some deliverables have changed since previous procurement.*

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), BHSB is seeking a qualified organization(s) to implement mental health services in Baltimore City Schools.

Licensed clinicians will provide prevention, early intervention, and treatment services. This RFP will identify provider organizations that will partner with Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) and BHSB to offer a continuum of mental health services in selected schools. Sub-vendors who are selected to receive this funding will participate in the implementation and planning of the Expanded School Behavioral Health program which will meet the overall goals of the ESBH program

to improve school readiness, improve student academic success, and help students foster healthy relationships. BCPS is responsible for selecting participating schools, and BHSB is responsible for identifying qualified provider organizations to participate in this portfolio of services. Services delivered in City Schools will promote school readiness, address barriers to learning, enable children and youth to make better use of educational programs, foster positive interpersonal relationships, and provide an alternative to behavioral health services within the structure of Special Education programs. Sub-vendors who are selected to be part of the Expanded School Behavioral Health program should have a documented history of providing trauma-informed, culturally competent and comprehensive mental health services to a diverse array of consumers. Sub-vendors should be willing to build upon pre-existing evidence-based practices which best serve youth and families with multicultural, LGBTQ+, and limited English proficiency identities.

Services delivered will include prevention, early intervention, crisis response, and treatment services. Although treatment services are included in the scope of service section outlined in this RFP, these services must be reimbursed through the Public Behavioral Health System. Grant funding will support prevention activities, which are not currently reimbursable by insurance, as well as service delivery to a proportion of uninsured youth which may be ineligible for reimbursement through the Public Behavioral Health System. Sub-vendors who are chosen to provide school-based mental health services should have capacity to serve at least 10 Baltimore City Public Schools at 0.5 FTE per school site. Capacity will be based on ability to hire and retain staff in a timely manner in order to avoid gaps in services.

### **C. SCOPE OF SERVICE**

BHSB will contract with mental health provider organizations to offer a continuum of mental health services with a strong emphasis on behavioral health promotion and prevention. Qualified behavioral health professionals assigned to work in city schools will promote positive social-emotional development and positive learning environments by implementing a comprehensive and integrated model of prevention and direct treatment services.

Prevention services will include participation in school-wide activities with students, families and caregivers, and school staff on a variety of topics and issues. Direct behavioral health treatment services can include, but are not limited to: individual, group, and family therapy. Direct behavioral health treatment services will also be offered to a proportion of uninsured youth under this contract.

Additionally, selected applicants will understand the importance of a shared school-family-community system designed to build a full continuum of behavioral health promotion for students enrolled in general education programs and their families.

## **Deliverables**

Through this contract, sub-vendor/consultant will:

- Provide mental health services to students enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools' General Education programs (approx. 60 per 0.5 FTE).
- Adhere to the Performance Standards for Mental Health Professionals in City Schools.
- Attend monthly Expanded School Behavioral Health Program (ESBH) Meetings.
- Provide mental health consultations for school staff, including classroom observations of students at risk (50 per 0.5 FTE).
- Conduct prevention group activities for students (25 per 0.5 FTE).
- Participate in school team/committee meetings (four per 0.5 FTE).
- Facilitate family outreach activities (at least one per 0.5 FTE).
- Provide in-service presentations on relevant mental health topics to school staff (two per 0.5 FTE).
- Support the Baltimore City Public School Crisis Response Team for crisis intervention as needed.
- Submit complete and accurate information for the web-based ESMH Data Program.
- Participate in the Evidence-Based Assessment (EBA) Initiative. This initiative involves the use of assessments that are reliable, valid, and clinically useful for the intended population; data collection at regular intervals throughout treatment; informing diagnosis, treatment planning, and outcome; and ongoing progress monitoring to inform changes in treatment.
- Implement a BHSB-approved process (survey, focus groups, etc.) to regularly solicit feedback from consumers (including youth and caregivers for sub-vendors working with minors) and to incorporate feedback received into the program. With each Program Report, the sub-vendor will briefly describe the feedback mechanism used, feedback received, and actions taken as a result of the feedback.
- Report any critical incidents (as defined in the BHSB "Critical Incident Protocol") that occurs at the program, or if the program has reasonable cause to believe an incident has occurred. <http://www.bhsbaltimore.org/providers/forms-for-providers/>
- Ensure a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan is contained in their Policies and Procedures manual, and ensure staff are trained and participate in regular mock exercises.
- Submit a copy of their plan to BHSB annually and whenever their plan is updated.

- Keep their BHSB Program Lead regularly updated on program successes and barriers, particularly those that relate to BHSB's strategic priorities related to trauma-responsiveness and equity.
- Participate in one BHSB site visit per year along with other potential scheduled or unscheduled site visits may be performed by BHSB.
- Maintain clinical records in accordance with the BHSB contracting agreement, Maryland Health General Article 4-403. Section 4-403(c), COMAR 10.63.01.05, and any other Federal or State regulation which applies under the program's licensure status. These records should include but are not limited to the following:
  - 1) Consent to Treatment
  - 2) Behavioral Health Assessment with diagnosis
  - 3) Individualized Treatment Plan
  - 4) Coordination of Care documentation (referrals and/or collaboration notes)
  - 5) Treatment/Progress Notes
  - 6) Discharge Summary (if applicable)
- Report any changes in personnel or vacancies among positions mandated by this contract or any other regulatory requirements to their BHSB Program Lead within two weeks.
- Document the use of approaches to reduce tobacco use and vaping among consumers and staff. Sub-vendor will have a written plan to establish tobacco/nicotine-free environments in all program-owned or leased buildings, grounds, parking lots, ramps, plazas, vehicles and adjacent sidewalks. Sub-vendor will complete and submit the BHSB Tobacco/Nicotine Cessation & Tobacco/Nicotine-Free Environments Questionnaire. The Sub-vendor is encouraged to use materials, training and consultation services available at Maryland Tobacco Resource Center ([www.MDQUIT.org](http://www.MDQUIT.org)) and other websites (see BHSB website for other recommended resources).
- Obtain annual Maryland Protective Services background check of employees, agents, and volunteers who shall provide direct services to minors under this Contract or who may come into regular unsupervised contact with minors. In any case where a finding is reported, Sub-Vendor and its subcontractors shall be responsible for taking immediate and appropriate action to protect the safety and welfare of any and all persons having contact with that individual.

People who have high exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (e.g. racism and other forms of systemic discrimination, abuse, neglect and poverty) are more vulnerable to behavioral health disorders and other chronic diseases across the lifetime. Sub-vendors are expected to ensure that staff participates in ongoing training and supervision that supports the implementation of policies and practices

that promote resilience and prevent and mitigate the negative effects of adversity and trauma.

BHSB is dedicated to enhancing outcomes reporting system-wide in order to evaluate the quality of public behavioral health services in Baltimore City. Overall, individuals receiving behavioral health services are expected to improve over time, and programs should be able to demonstrate expected outcomes. The selected applicant(s) will be expected to report client-level data to BHSB and its partners during the entirety of the approved service term via a web-based program. Additionally, contracted providers are required to submit regular program and financial reports to BHSB using an online Contract Management System.

BHSB will engage in monitoring activities to evaluate the quality of various aspects of services delivery. Some of these activities include a) Site visits to observe, evaluate, and document various administrative and programmatic requirements, b) Review of data reports to evaluate programmatic outcomes, c) Review of financial reports to evaluate financial outcomes, and d) Review of general administrative compliance documents. The selected applicant will be required to participate in all relevant monitoring and evaluation activities. In some instances, BHSB sets requirements above and beyond those specific in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) in order to meet the specific needs of you in City Schools. These additional requirements will be monitored and evaluated throughout the term of the agreement. If, during monitoring activities, it is discovered that the selected applicant(s) is not fulfilling the obligations stated in the contract resulting from this RFP, a Corrective Action Plan may be required, with additional follow-up monitoring to ensure requirements are being met.

#### **D. FOCUS POPULATION**

Youth attending Baltimore City schools and families affiliated with those schools.

#### **E. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS**

Organizations that apply should have the capacity to staff at least 10 schools at 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (at least 0.5 FTE per school). All clinicians hired for this program must be licensed or certified at the appropriate level to practice in Maryland.

Additionally, it is expected that clinicians will be able to demonstrate at least two years of relevant experience and knowledge of the population to be served. Professionals should have experience in treatment strategies in the areas of child behavior management and family crisis intervention, the ability to work with families in a supportive manner throughout the diagnostic and referral processes, and the ability to provide treatment for children and adolescents.

All clinicians must adhere to BCPS's requirements around criminal background checks. Applicants selected through this RFP will be expected to have robust staff training plans. Programs should also provide adequate supervision of staff, particularly for staff members who spend most of their time in the field.

## **F. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

The Expanded School Behavioral Health portfolio has multiple funders, including Baltimore City Public Schools, the Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration, and private foundations. There is approximately \$2.3 million that could potentially be awarded through this RFP process. Contract funding made available through this opportunity will support the prevention component of these services; provider agencies must access reimbursement through the Public Behavioral Health System to support the treatment services component. It is anticipated that 65% of all services provided will focus on treatment activities that are eligible for fee-for-service reimbursement. Selected sub-vendors may also be eligible for additional funding through Baltimore City Public Schools direct school funding and other initiatives.

Contract funding is available in the amount of \$20,000 for a licensed mental health clinician at 0.5 FTE. This award amount is inclusive of salary, fringe, supervision, and indirect costs, which cannot exceed 10% of salary and fringe expenses. Line-item budgets should detail these expenses separately, and proposed grant award amounts cannot exceed these limits per FTE proposed clinician (e.g., for 6.5 FTE clinicians, grant funds cannot exceed \$260,000). Additional costs are expected to be offset by fee-for-service revenue. All revenue sources should be reflected in both the budget and budget narrative sections of the submitted proposal.

## **G. CONTRACTING WITH BHSB**

Applicants selected through this process will enter into a contractual agreement with BHSB. Following a notification of selection, BHSB will issue a Letter of Award that provides details about the contract and the process for executing it. Selected organizations will be required to submit a new budget on BHSB's budget form, which will be reviewed for allowable costs under the grant.

Please note that applicants may be asked to change their budgets and/or details of their proposals even if the proposal were selected for funding. Applicants new to BHSB's contract process are encouraged to review relevant forms available on our website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/forms-for-providers>.



### Contract Type and Payment

The contract and payment type that will result from this procurement is described below. Applicants are encouraged to consider whether their organization will be able to operate with this payment mechanism before applying for these funds.

- Cost Reimbursement – Actual Expenditures
  - Sub-vendor receives payment after costs are incurred and reported. Payment is based on the costs reported for a specific period.

BHSB issues payments once per month. Applicants should note that submitting required documents and reports late can result in delayed payment.

### Contract Monitoring and Technical Assistance

Selected applicants will be required to submit regular Program and Financial reports to BHSB using an electronic contract management system. BHSB will review these reports to monitor progress and contract compliance throughout the contract term.

**Program Reports** include an update on progress toward deliverables (e.g., number of people served, number of services delivered, etc.). Some program reports may also require organizations to attach a data report with additional information (e.g., consumer demographic information, process and/or outcomes data, etc.). BHSB monitors progress on these reports throughout the contract term and may offer technical assistance and support if deliverables are not being met. Reports are due to BHSB by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following each quarterly reporting period.

**Financial Reports** are required to generate payment and involve submitting actual expenditures or invoices (depending on the contract type) and to monitor spending compared to the budget or award amount. If organizations are spending more or less than expected awarded throughout the contract term, BHSB may offer technical assistance and support to ensure the funding covers the contract term fully and may reduce funding if all funds are not likely to be expended by the end of the contract term.

Please note that submitting Program or Financial Reports late can result in delayed payment.

### Verification of Services

BHSB audits all contracts to review whether the requirements set forth in the contract were completed as reported and that relevant federal, state, and local regulations were followed. This generally occurs after the conclusion of the contract

period. Audits may be conducted remotely through a review of documents submitted to BHSB or on-site at the organization's location.

Applicants should be aware of best practices in documenting both programmatic and financial activities to aid in an efficient audit.

## II. Overview of RFP

### A. PURPOSE OF RFP

The purpose of this RFP is to select providers to implement mental health services in Baltimore City Schools through licensed clinicians who will provide prevention, early intervention, and treatment services. Prevention services will include participation in school-wide activities with students, families and caregivers, and school staff on a variety of topics and issues.

### B. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet all of the criteria outlined below to be considered eligible to be selected through this RFP process:

- Licensure or accreditation as an Outpatient Mental Health Center (OMHC) for a minimum of two years as of December 31, 2021 with the ability to access reimbursement through Optum Health.
- Demonstrated ability to staff at least 10 schools at 0.5 FTE per school.

### C. PROPOSAL TIMEFRAME AND SPECIFICATIONS

#### 1. Timeline

Release Date:	January 12, 2022
Pre-Proposal Conference:	January 27, 2022 at 10:30 am
Proposal Due:	February 18, 2022 by 12:00 pm
Anticipated Award Notification:	April 8, 2022
Anticipated Contract Start:	July 1, 2022

#### 2. Pre-Proposal Conference

**Date:** January 27, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 am to 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** Microsoft Teams meeting - Join on your computer or mobile app

**[Click here to join the meeting](#)**

**Or call in (audio only):** 443-819-0973

Phone Conference ID: 494 008 250#

*Please join five minutes early to leave time to troubleshoot. If you have any problems accessing the meeting, please contact [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).*

All questions related to this RFP should be submitted in advance to [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org) no later than the close of business on

**January 25, 2022.** There may be time at the end of the meeting to ask additional questions, depending on the number of questions submitted.

Questions posed prior to or during the Pre-Proposal Conference and BHSB's responses will be posted on BHSB's website at <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/> by **February 2, 2022.**

The questions and answers will also be emailed to all individuals who submitted questions. If you would like to be emailed this document but do not have a question, please let the Procurement Lead know by emailing [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).

*Questions received after this conference cannot be answered.*

### **3. Proposal Due Date, Time, and Location**

BHSB uses Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) to manage applications. All proposals must be submitted through this system. Applicants must register with the system ahead of time and submit narrative and supporting documents directly through the system. You are able to save your application and continue working on it before submitting it. BHSB encourages all applicants to test this system well in advance of submitting proposals.

Applicants can access SM Apply here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>

All proposals must be received no later than **12:00 pm (noon) EST on February 18, 2022.** All submitted proposals become the property of BHSB. If you are having technical troubles related to submitting your proposal, contact BHSB before the due date/time at [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

*Proposals submitted after the due date/time cannot be considered.*

### **4. Authorized Contact**

Applicants are advised that the authorized contact person for all matters concerning this RFP is Kelsi Loos whose contact information is listed below.

Kelsi Loos, Procurement Lead  
Email: [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

**5. Anticipated Service Term:** July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023, with options to renew annually pending availability of funding and performance.

## **D. AWARD OF CONTRACT**

The submission of a proposal does not, in any way, guarantee an award. BHSB is not responsible for any costs incurred related to the preparation of a proposal in response to this RFP. BHSB reserves the right to withdraw an award prior to execution of a contract with a selected applicant in BHSB's sole and absolute discretion.

BHSB will select the most qualified and responsive applicants through this RFP process. BHSB will enter into a contract with selected applicants following the notification of award. All selected applicants must comply with all terms and conditions applicable to contracts executed by BHSB.

## **E. RFP POSTPONEMENT/CANCELLATION**

BHSB reserves the right to postpone or cancel this RFP, in whole or in part.

## **F. APPLICANT APPEAL RIGHTS**

Applicants may file an appeal within five days of notification of non-selection. BHSB will review the appeal, examine any additional information provided by the protesting party, and respond to the protestor within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

## **G. GOVERNING LAW AND VACCINATION MANDATES**

The applicant acknowledges and agrees that BHSB is a federal contractor for purposes of Executive Order 14042, Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors (the "Order"). The applicant and its subcontractors shall comply with the Order and all other applicable mandates, rules, laws, and regulations (collectively, the "Requirements"). Upon request by BHSB, selected applicants shall promptly provide evidence of compliance with the Requirements and shall promptly take such further actions as may be requested by BHSB with respect to the Requirements and/or the resulting Contract. The applicant and all of its subcontractors shall, for the duration of the resulting Contract, comply with all guidance for contractor and subcontractor workplace locations published by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force. These requirements shall be incorporated into all subcontracts of Sub-Vendor.

### **III. Format and Content of Proposal**

#### **A. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Applicants must submit all required information using Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) accessible here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>.

*Late proposals will not be considered.*

It is the policy of BHSB to adhere to the rules and regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). We do not anticipate that any proposal submitted in response to this RFP would include individually identifiable health information. However, if it does, please remember that protected health information (PHI) needs to be secured via encryption and should adhere to the Guide to IT Privacy and Security of Electronic Health Information:

<https://www.healthit.gov/topic/privacy-security-and-hipaa/health-it-privacy-and-security-resources-providers>.

#### **B. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE OUTLINE AND RATING CRITERIA**

The outline below shows the information being requested for applications and how points will be awarded during the review. Use SM Apply to submit your responses. See the instructions for more information about how to submit proposals.

##### **1. Organizational Background and Capacity (25 points)**

- a. Provide an overview of your organization, including how long it has operated outpatient mental health services or became licensed as an OMHC and when it received or expects to receive accreditation. Attach as an appendix all relevant licenses and certifications. (5 points)
- b. Describe your organization's ability to access third-party reimbursement, particularly Medicaid, for behavioral health services. (5 points)
- c. Describe your organization's experience managing programs similar to this project, meeting contractual deliverables and obligations (including any contracts with BHSB), and your capacity to manage the programmatic and financial requirements of this grant. (6 points)
- d. Provide an overview of your organization's experience in the last three years providing outpatient mental health services to youth. (6 points)
- e. Describe whether your organization is owned and/or led by members of historically marginalized or oppressed groups, including racial and ethnic groups (i.e., African American/Black, Latinx), LGBTQIA communities, people with disabilities including behavioral health disorders, etc. BHSB awards additional points to help address systemic barriers that have led to inequity in access to funding. (3 points)

## **2. Principles and Values (15 points)**

- a. Describe how your organization's current practices ensure services are delivered in a culturally and linguistically competent manner, responsive to the diverse communities served, including individuals for whom English is a second language and individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ (5 points)
- b. Describe your understanding of Social Determinants of Health and what it means for your organization's work. How will your organization address the impact of social determinants of health in this program? (5 points)
- c. Describe your organization's commitment to a trauma-informed and responsive approach and any trauma-specific interventions your organization currently offers or would implement if awarded this grant.(5 points)

## **3. Service Delivery (20 points)**

- a. Describe your organization's plan to provide all services as outlined in the Scope of Service section of this RFP. (5 points)
- b. Describe your organization's ability to successfully implement evidence-based trauma-responsive services, how you will use these interventions within the program, and maintain fidelity to the standards model. (5 points)
- c. Describe how your organization will collaborate with Baltimore City Public Schools staff to identify and engage individuals in need of services and ensure that all individuals referred will, with consent, be linked to and/or receive needed services. (5 points)
- d. Describe how the proposed program would handle overdoses, suicide risk, and behavioral health crises when they occur onsite, giving examples of how your organization has managed these in the recent past. (5 points)

## **4. Staffing Plan (10 points)**

- a. Describe your proposed staffing pattern, including supervisors, and how it will fulfill the staffing requirements in this RFP. Include an organizational chart that shows how this program will fit into your organization's overall structure. (5 points)
- b. Describe your plan to ensure adequate support and clinical supervision for staff, particularly staff who work independently/ off-site. (5 points)

## **5. Effectively Serving the Focus Population (5 points)**

- a. Describe your organization's history and expertise in collaborating with community partners to provide the best quality of care to youth and families, please share specific examples. (5 points)

**6. Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (10 points)**

- a. Describe how your organization obtains and incorporates feedback from people served and other stakeholders into the development, implementation, operation, and improvement of program services. (5 points)
- b. Describe how your organization would address any staff vacancies and turnover for the ESBH program should they occur. (5 Points)

**7. Proposed Program Budget (5 points)**

- a. Attach a line-item budget for the grant period in the RFP that includes anticipated revenue from grant funding and fee-for-service reimbursement and all expenses as an appendix. BHSB has budget forms on its website that can be used but are not required for this submission.
- b. Provide a budget justification/narrative explains the projected revenue and expenses in more detail.

**8. Implementation Timeline (5 points)**

- a. Provide a detailed timeline for implementation that includes all of the activities that you have committed to perform in your proposal. Show an outline of all the steps necessary to fully operationalize this project and by when each step will be completed. Contracts are expected to start on July 1, 2022.

**9. Appendices**

- Most recent audited financial report, including the consolidated statements, schedule of findings, and management letter
- Most recent IRS 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Taxes, if applicable (or an explanation if this is not applicable)
- Certificate of Good Standing from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation