



**Behavioral Health System**  
Baltimore

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

***Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH)***

***Head Start Initiative***

**Release Date: March 27, 2026**

**Pre-Proposal Conference: April 1, 2026, at 3:00 pm**

**Proposals Due: April 27, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.**

**Anticipated Award Notification: June 19, 2026**

**Anticipated Contract Start: July 1, 2026**

**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

## ***Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Head Start Initiative***

### OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

#### Overview of BHSB

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a non-profit organization that serves as the Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA) on behalf of Baltimore City and operates in this role under the authority of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). BHSB is responsible for planning, managing, and monitoring resources, programs, and policies within the larger Medicaid fee-for-service system, as well as services directly funded by BHSB through private and public grants. We use our knowledge of what services are available and how to structure system resources to meet the unique needs of the communities we serve.

BHSB envisions a city where people live and thrive in communities that promote and support behavioral health and wellness. We are committed to building a system of care that serves all community members in need of services. We work to ensure that the most appropriate care is provided, taking into consideration family and community differences.

#### Description of Project

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), BHSB is seeking up to three (3) qualified organizations to provide mental health services for the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Head Start Initiative. The ECMH Head Start Initiative delivers individual and classroom mental health consultation to targeted Head Start programs and licensed Early Childhood Development Centers in Baltimore City, serving preschool children ages 3–5. Its primary goal is to equip teachers with strategies to manage challenging behaviors and support children with mental health needs, ultimately improving kindergarten readiness. This initiative addresses the gaps in kindergarten readiness by targeting behavioral challenges early. It also prioritizes reducing school suspensions and improving educational outcomes.

#### Scope of Service

The selected applicants will provide comprehensive Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) services to Head Start programs and Early Childhood Development Centers located throughout Baltimore City. Services must include classroom-based and individual consultation, child assessments, and training for staff and families. All

services must be delivered using a trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and family-centered approach that supports the social-emotional development and well-being of young children.

### **Assessments**

The selected applicants must administer [Devereux Early Childhood Assessments \(DECA\)](#) to children enrolled in Head Start and Early Childhood Development Centers. The DECA-C is an evidence-based assessment tool designed to identify children who may be at risk for social-emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges within educational and childcare settings.

The DECA-C assessment evaluates key areas of social-emotional functioning, including but not limited to:

- Self-regulation and self-control
- Initiative and engagement
- Attachment and relationships
- Behavioral concerns such as aggression, withdrawal, or emotional dysregulation

Assessment results shall be used to identify children's and areas of vulnerability and to determine whether referrals for additional mental health or supportive services are warranted. The selected applicants are responsible for ensuring assessments are administered, scored, and interpreted in accordance with established DECA-C guidelines and best practices.

### **Consultation, Coaching, and Training**

The selected applicants will deliver comprehensive mental health consultation services to staff and families in alignment with the Maryland SEFEL Pyramid Model, serving a minimum caseload of 48 children per 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE).

The Maryland SEFEL Pyramid Model is a research-based framework designed to promote the social and emotional development of young children through the creation of supportive relationships and intentional learning environments. Grounded in evidence-informed practices, the model emphasizes collaborative partnerships among early childhood providers, families, and home visitors to strengthen children's social and emotional foundations. The Pyramid Model is organized into multiple tiers, each addressing essential components of social-emotional competence, including nurturing relationships, environments, and the development of targeted skills such as emotional identification and expression, self-regulation, and peer interaction.

Services shall include ongoing consultation, coaching, and professional development for Head Start and Early Childhood Development Center staff and families. They will conduct regular classroom observations, shadow instructional staff as appropriate, and provide structured, reflective coaching and feedback. Additionally, they will assess instructional practices and deliver targeted consultation and actionable

recommendations to strengthen strategies that promote children’s social, emotional, and behavioral development.

Training and consultation topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Early childhood social-emotional development
- Trauma-informed care, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Evidence-based approaches for supporting children with challenging behaviors
- Strategies to strengthen classroom environments and improve teacher-child interactions

Applicants must utilize evidence-based training and consultation models, including but not limited to:

- The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence
- Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) or other comparable relationship-based frameworks.
  - Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) is a relationship-based approach designed to strengthen connections between providers and parents, with the goal of supporting parents in becoming more attuned and responsive to their children’s needs. The FAN approach equips professionals with strategies to engage families in ways that promote emotional attunement, self-regulation, and collaborative problem-solving. Through reflective and responsive interactions, FAN supports positive parent-child relationships that are essential to young children’s social-emotional development and overall family well-being.

In addition, selected applicants will provide parenting education and support services designed to enhance caregivers’ capacity to support children’s emotional and behavioral development. These services may include the implementation of evidence-based parent education programs such as the Chicago Parent Program or other comparable, research-supported models. The Chicago Parent Program is a 12-session, evidence-based parenting intervention designed to strengthen parenting skills and confidence while promoting positive parent-child relationships. The program supports effective child behavior management, reduces parental stress, and fosters social connections among participating families and community agencies. Through guided group sessions, the Chicago Parent Program equips parents with practical strategies to support children’s social and emotional development and overall well-being.

Selected applicants are required to facilitate a minimum of six (6) staff trainings and six (6) parent/caregiver trainings annually.

Additional required responsibilities include:

- Participating in Individualized Education Program (IEP), Child Development Team (CDT), and other relevant meetings

- Facilitating referrals to community-based service providers, including but not limited to speech and occupational therapy
- Conducting family and community outreach activities, which may include parent trainings or workshops, camps, and tabling at Head Start events

### **Project Deliverables**

The selected applicants will be responsible for the following deliverables:

- Serve a caseload of 48 unduplicated children per 1.0 FTE.
- Provide a minimum of 144 mental health consultation sessions annually, delivered individually or within classroom settings.
- Conduct and document at least 60 classroom observations annually, including the provision of structured coaching and feedback, equating to 20 observations per 1.0 FTE.

Document observation sites and coaching sessions with feedback from teachers.

- Administer DECA-C assessments twice per year (pre- and post-tests) for 100% of children served.
- Refer a minimum of 10 children annually to community-based services/providers. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Individualized Education Program (IEP)
  - Part B services support children ages 3 through 21 who are eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address identified educational and developmental needs.
  - Part C are provided to infants and toddlers with developmental delays through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)- with a focus on early intervention and family-centered supports.
- Deliver six (6) staff trainings and six (6) parent/guardian trainings annually, including agendas, handouts, and satisfaction surveys.
- Participate in CDT, IEP, and other staff meetings as requested (minimum 16 annually).
- Develop and distribute an annual Community Mental Health Resource Guide.
- Collaborate with at least four (4) community partners annually.
- Submit all required data. This includes but is not limited to demographic data, staffing logs, activity reports, and narrative summaries.

## **Focus Population**

Children ages three (3) to five (5) enrolled in Baltimore City Head Start and Early Childhood Development Centers, along with their families and program staff. Priority shall be given to children identified as at risk based on results from the DECA-C assessment or those referred for behavioral health or social-emotional supports.

## **Staffing Requirements**

Staff/individuals working on this project must have relevant experience and knowledge to meet the needs of the people who will be served within the scope of the project. The selected applicants shall determine the appropriate FTE staffing pattern based on the needs of the project.

- Independently Licensed Advanced Clinical Mental Health Professionals:
  - Licensed Certified Social Worker–Clinical (LCSW-C)
  - Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC)
- Master’s-Level Licensed Mental Health Professionals
  - Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW)
  - Licensed Graduate Professional Counselor (LGPC)

Selected applicants must provide ongoing clinical supervision and training in accordance with each staff member’s licensure board requirements.

## **Funding Availability**

Funding availability for the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Head Start Initiative is \$166,122 to be divided amongst the selected applicants. Funding amounts will be determined by the required contracted FTE. The funding has the option to renew annually, pending the availability of funding and performance.

Award funds may be applied only to allowable costs and may not duplicate or supplant Medicaid or public behavioral health fee-for-service reimbursements. Applicants must bill Medicaid for all reimbursable services and use grant funds solely for non-reimbursable services.

## **Risk Assessment**

BHSB completes a risk assessment as part of the procurement process. Applicants should be sure to provide the most recent available versions of all requested documentation with their RFP application.

## 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. The selected applicants will be required to submit a new budget on BHSB's budget forms, 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 was 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 are 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 contract

- 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 on track to be met.

**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 of their award amount throughout the contract term, BHSB may offer technical assistance and support to ensure the funding covers the contract term fully, and BHSB 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. Failure by vendors to comply with the terms of any contract with BHSB may result in the denial of future contracts with BHSB.

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

# OVERVIEW OF RFP

## Purpose of RFP

BHSB is seeking three (3) qualified organizations to provide mental health services for the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Head Start Initiative. The ECMH Head Start Initiative delivers individual and classroom mental health consultation to targeted Head Start programs and licensed Early Childhood Development Centers in Baltimore City, serving preschool children ages 3–5.

## Applicant Eligibility

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

- Be licensed as a Maryland COMAR 10.63 Outpatient Mental Health Center.
- In Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation
- Able to bill and receive reimbursement with Medicaid.
- For applicants that currently receive grant funds from BHSB or did receive grant funds in prior years:
  - No outstanding financial audits
  - No money owed to BHSB
  - No current Corrective Action Plans (CAP) for which the applicant has not met identified targets more than two years beyond the date the CAP was issued.
  - No more than one (1) Accountability Compliance Audit in the two fiscal years preceding the current fiscal year that reflects unresolved deficiencies.

## Proposal Timeline and Specifications

### 1. Timeline

Release Date:	March 27, 2026
Pre-Proposal Conference:	April 1, 2026, at 3 p.m.
Proposal Due:	April 27, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
Anticipated Award Notification:	June 19, 2026
Anticipated Contract Start:	July 1, 2026
Anticipated Service Start:	July 1, 2026

### 2. Pre-Proposal Conference

**Date:** April 1, 2026

**Time:** 3:00 pm

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

**Click here to join the meeting [Early Childhood Mental Health Pre-Proposal Conference](#)**

**Or call in (audio only):** +1 443-819-0973,,907107695#

Phone Conference ID: 907 107 695#

*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).*

Questions related to this RFP will be answered at the Pre-Proposal Conference. Questions posed during the conference and BHSB's responses will be posted on BHSB's website at <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/> by **April 8, 2026**.

Individuals who attended the Pre-Proposal Conference will be notified by email when questions and answers are posted on BHSB's website.

*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 **5:00 pm EST on April 27, 2026**.

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 Ashley Coston, whose contact information is listed below.

Ashley Coston, Procurement Lead

Email: [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

**6. Anticipated Service Term:** July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026 with options to renew annually pending availability of funding and performance.

### **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.

### **RFP Postponement/Cancellation**

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

### **Applicant Appeal Process**

Applications must be complete and fully responsive to the below Proposal Narrative Outline and must include all required appendices. Applicants may file an appeal within five days of notification of non-selection. BHSB will not review new proposal materials that were not included in the application. BHSB will review the appeal letter and respond to the non-selected applicant within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

# FORMAT AND CONTENT OF PROPOSAL

## Proposal Instructions

- Applicants must submit all required information using Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) accessible here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>. We recommend you start your application early so you know what to expect with the system.

***Late proposals will not be considered.***

- Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly prevalent. While AI is a helpful tool, it is important to ensure that proposals reflect authentic responses and realistic service delivery plans.
- It is the policy of BHSB to adhere to the rules and regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which require appropriate safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and security of all protected health information. No proposals submitted in response to this RFP should include individually identifiable health information.

For more information, please refer 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>.

## 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 (10 points)**

- a. Provide an overview of your organization, including its history, mission, and overall purpose.
- b. Describe your organization's history and experience working with the focus population, including the length of time delivering services to children and families.

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

- a. Describe your organization's commitment to a trauma-informed and responsive approach and any trauma-specific interventions your organization currently offers and/or would implement if awarded this grant.

### **3. Service Delivery (45 points)**

- a. Describe your organization's ability to effectively implement services that meet the needs of each person served, taking into consideration family, community, and regional differences. How will you maintain a high level of quality and person-centered care?
- b. Describe your approach to collaborating with Head Start programs and Early Childhood Centers to engage families, support child development, and ensure children are academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for a successful transition into kindergarten.
- c. Describe how your organization will collaborate with other community-based organizations in Baltimore City 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.

#### **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.
- b. Describe your proposed training plan for staff assigned to this program and indicate any relevant expertise, training, and/or skills staff already possess.

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

- a. Describe how your organization is uniquely qualified to address the needs of each person served through this project. How will you take into consideration individual, family, and community differences experienced by the focus population?

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

- a. Describe how your organization obtains and incorporates feedback from people served and other stakeholders. How do you use feedback to develop, implement, operationalize, and/or improve program services?
- b. Describe any previous experience your organization has had implementing similar projects. Were you able to meet all of the programmatic and financial deliverables and reporting requirements? How did you address any quality concerns?

#### **7. Implementation Timeline (5 points)**

- a. Provide a detailed timeline for implementation that includes all of the activities you have committed to perform in your proposal. Show an

outline of all the steps necessary to operationalize this project fully, and by when each step would be completed. Contracts are expected to start on July 1, 2026.

## 8. Appendices

- Copies of all relevant licenses/certifications, including any licenses issued by the Maryland Department of Health (BHA and OHCQ). BHSB is aware that BHA is experiencing delays with license applications. Please upload a copy of the letter from BHA acknowledging receipt of the application, along with a copy of the most recent license.
- Most recent site visit report from the ASO, Accrediting Organization, and/or the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ), including any statements of deficiencies and program improvement plans
- Organizational chart
- Resume or curriculum vitae for individuals/consultants working on this project
- Verification of ability to bill and receive reimbursement from the Administrative Services Organization (ASO) for Maryland Medicaid's public behavioral health system [and/or Maryland Medicaid], which may be one of the following:
  - Medicaid Provider Enrollment Letter or Certificate
  - Medicaid Provider Number/ID Confirmation
  - Medicaid Participation Agreement
- Most recent final Financial Audit package, including Findings and Management Letter from an independent auditor (preferred) OR a recent unaudited Income Statement **AND** Balance Sheet. If an audit is not available, please upload a statement detailing why.
- Most recent IRS 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Taxes, **OR** if an IRS 990 form is not required to be filed, the most recent Business Tax Return, OR the Schedule C only of the most recent Personal Tax Return. (Please redact any social security numbers on the Schedule C.)
- Completed and signed [Organizational Capacity Assessment](#) (This form is available on BHSB's website. Click on For Providers, select Forms for Providers, then scroll down to Key Information for Contracts.)
- Certificate of Good Standing from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (screenshots from the MDAT website will not be accepted) - the certificate must be dated within one year of the RFP submission due date.