

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

**DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION
SERVICES**

REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST

**Capacity Building for Current Lifeline
Contact Centers
(in preparation for 988)**

June 22, 2022

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Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Background:

On July 16, 2022, the current 10-digit number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will transition to 988, the new 3-digit dialing code for mental health crisis and suicide prevention. In calendar year 2020, the Lifeline network received over 55,000 calls from New Jersey residents. Based on nationally established projections, New Jersey is estimated to experience a 30-50% increase in call volume during the first year of 988. The five (5) current Lifeline contact/member centers must be ready for this rapid expansion of requests from individuals in crisis.

Available Resources:

The focus of this Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) is to provide funds for capacity building of staff and response structure to the two (2) current NJ Lifeline member centers that have not yet received DMHAS awards for this purpose.

This Funding Opportunity requires commitment to one or both of the following related to 988 contacts from New Jersey:

- Responding to a minimum of 1,000 calls per year received by the Lifeline
- Responding to a minimum of 1,000 chats and texts combined (chats/texts) per year received by the Lifeline*

*NOTE: If an agency chooses this category, it is expected that its center will respond to both chats and texts. This funding opportunity is not available for responding to only chats or only texts. This combined expectation will be represented by “chats/texts.” The minimum number of chats/texts that will be funded is a combined total of 1,000 (chats + texts).

Total funding available through this RLI is \$500,000, based on funding availability. This RLI is for one-time funding to cover the period from Final Award until April 29, 2024. Applicants are advised that contract awards are conditional upon final contract and budget negotiation. Funding is offered in two categories:

- Commitment for responding to calls: \$75,000 annually per 1,000 calls
- Commitment for responding to chats/texts: \$80,000 annually per 1,000 chat/texts

Within this initiative, up to two (2) awards will be available, one (1) to each of the current NJ Lifeline member centers as detailed in this solicitation. Applicant’s commitment can be for multiples of 1,000 calls and/or chats/texts. Requests for items to improve an agency’s response structure will be considered if they are specific to the provision of 988 services.

Successful awardees will recruit, hire and train contact center staff to answer calls and/or chats/texts for the 988 Lifeline system no later than 45 days following Final Award. The funding for this RLI is specifically dedicated to the addition of staff qualified to answer calls and/or chats/texts and make follow-up contacts related to mental health crisis and suicide prevention.

Requirements to Apply:

To be considered for this opportunity, eligible providers must commit to the following expectations, and include details about how this will be accomplished in its Letter of Interest (“LOI”), established by Vibrant for Lifeline centers:

- Respond to at least 90% of calls presented to the center by Lifeline
- Ensure services are available and accessible to persons with limited English proficiency
- Establish and maintain plan to provide referrals for mental health and substance use services, housing, social services and other resources as needed and appropriate

To be considered for this opportunity, eligible providers must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must be a current NJ Lifeline member center that has not yet received a Capacity Building grant in preparation for transition to 988;
- The applicant must be in good standing with the State of New Jersey (if applicant is a contracted agency);
- The applicant must be able to clearly demonstrate the need for the proposed staff and/or technology through call center data from the last 6-12 months;
- For an applicant that has a contract with DMHAS in place when this RLI is issued, that applicant must have all outstanding Plans of Correction for deficiencies submitted to DMHAS for approval prior to proposal submission;
- The applicant must be fiscally viable based upon an assessment of the applicant's audited financial statements. If an applicant is determined, in DMHAS' sole discretion, to be insolvent or to present insolvency within the twelve (12) months after LOI submission, DMHAS will deem the LOI ineligible for contract award;
- The applicant must not appear on the State of New Jersey Consolidated Debarment Report at <http://www.nj.gov/treasury/revenue/debarment/debarsearch.shtml> or be suspended or debarred by any other State or Federal entity from receiving funds;
- The applicant shall not employ a member of the Board of Directors as an employee or in a consultant capacity; and
- Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-44, a for-profit applicant and each proposed subcontractor must have a valid Business Registration Certificate on file with the Division of Revenue. This statutory requirement does not apply to non-profit organizations, private colleges and universities, or state and municipal agencies.

LOI Submission Instructions:

- Applicants must submit all written questions by the date shown below. Written responses will be provided by DMHAS within a reasonable time.
- Final application must be received by DMHAS by the date shown below to be eligible for review and possible Award.
- Additionally, applicants must request login credentials by emailing MH.upload@dhs.nj.gov **on or before July 13, 2022** in order to receive unique login credentials to upload your proposal to the SFTP site. Email requests for login credentials must include the individual's first name, last name, email address and name of agency/provider.
- LOIs must be uploaded to the DHS SFTP site, <https://securexfer.dhs.state.nj.us/login> using your unique login credentials.

Application Submission Due Dates:

Posting Date: June 22, 2022

Written Questions due: June 29, 2022 by 4:00 PM

Request for Log-in Credentials: July 13, 2022 by 4:00 PM

Due Date: Responses to this RLI are due by 4:00 PM on July 20, 2022

Notification Date: All applicants will be notified on or before August 2, 2022

Contract Start Date: August 15, 2022

Review of LOIs:

There will be a review process for all timely submitted LOIs. DMHAS will convene a review committee of public employees to conduct a review of each LOI accepted for review.

The applicant must obtain a minimum score of 70 out of 100 points for the narrative and budget sections (see below for details) in order to be considered eligible for funding.

DMHAS will award up to 20 points for fiscal viability, using a standardized scoring rubric based on the audit, which will be added to the average score given to the LOI from the review committee. Thus, the maximum points any LOI can receive is 120 points, which includes the combined score from the LOI narrative and budget as well as fiscal viability.

Contract award recommendations will be based on such factors as the LOI scope, quality and appropriateness, applicant history and experience, as well as budget reasonableness. The review committee may invite applicants for interview and/or review any programmatic or fiscal documents in the possession of DMHAS.

DMHAS reserves the right to reject any and all LOIs when circumstances indicate that doing so is in its best interest. DMHAS' best interests in this context include, but are not limited to, loss of funding, inability of the applicant(s) to provide adequate services, an indication of misrepresentation of information and/or non-compliance with State and federal laws and regulations, existing DHS contracts, and procedures set forth in DHS Policy Circular P1.04 <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/olra/contracting/policy/>.

LOI:

Applicants interested in being considered for this 988 Capacity Building grant should provide the information below in its LOI.

Response Narrative (Maximum 8 pages)

Narrative Response must be single-spaced with one (1") inch margins, normal character spacing that is not condensed, and no smaller than twelve (12) point Arial, Courier New or Times New Roman font. DMHAS will not consider any information submitted beyond the stated page limit.

A. Mission and Background of Agency: 5 Points

Please provide the mission and a brief historical background of the applicant. Include the applicant's experience with responding to calls, chats and/or texts related to mental health crisis and suicidal ideation.

B. Project Description: 70 Points (total)

Detail the following:

Staffing – 35 Points

- Provide details on the additional staff, in full-time equivalencies, for each staff category that will be employed through this initiative. This should include clear details on whether current staff/volunteers (e.g. per diem staff, part-time volunteers) will be used and/or whether new staff will be hired and on-boarded.
- Describe strategies for rapid recruitment including efforts to employ Spanish speakers and members of underserved populations.
- List in a table the qualifications (i.e., professional licensing and related experience) of the new staff allocated to and/or planned for this initiative.
- Detail how the additional staff will be hired and trained within 45 days.
- Provide details on the staff's linguistic capabilities. Specify the center's access to linguistic capability in meeting caller's needs.
- Briefly detail activities related to addressing diversity, inclusion, equity, and cultural/linguistic competence with staff.
- Discuss the space and technological capacity of the current center to accommodate the additional staff necessary for this initiative.

Service Delivery – 35 Points

- Using current center data, demonstrate the need for the proposed staff and/or technology to meet the required level of commitment.
- Detail the impact that the expanded staffing will have on the center's call answer rate and follow-up capacity outlined by Vibrant (see endnote below). Confirm expectation that this expansion will establish a 90% answer rate.
- Detail and quantify how the proposed new staff/technology will improve the center's ability to respond to crisis calls, chats and/or texts (as applicable).
- Briefly explain how center staff will transition service users to appropriate community services (e.g. acute care or outpatient services, peer/recovery support services, etc.) based on initial assessment. Confirm commitment to providing referrals whenever it could be useful to person contacting 988.
- Provide information on center's recent success with handling calls, chats and/or texts using 6 -12 months of data for
 - Number of contacts answered/month
 - Average answer rate
 - Average speed to answer.
 - Provide the minimum and maximum number of staff/volunteers answering calls at any one time during the week.
- Include how the center will respond to the diversity of language, beliefs, norms, values of callers and issues of cultural competence in general. Confirm commitment to providing translation services for individuals needing services in a language other than English.
- List proposed primary and back up counties to be covered by proposed services.

C. Implementation Timeline: 5 points

Please provide a timeline starting from notification of award through implementation 45 days later.

D. Budget Clarity: 15 points

Provide a clearly detailed budget using Excel Budget Template to be provided.

E. Attestations: 5 Points

- Include an attestation that you will comply with all reporting requirements.
- Include an attestation that funding received from this initiative will not be used for other agency projects.

Additional Requirements:

988 follow-up calls must include the following:

- All callers/chat visitors/texters that confirm current suicidal ideation (at the time of the call or within the past 24 hours) during their interaction with the Lifeline must be asked for consent to follow-up services.
- Lifeline center must ask callers/chat visitors/texters for consent to receive follow-up services.
- The National Lifeline has a recommended consent form but centers can adapt their own, however, it should include all elements on the recommended form.
- Telephone follow-up is the only current modality that can be offered through the Lifeline, but we are exploring other options that may offer some future technological aids, like outbound texting or messaging.
- First follow-up contact should typically occur within 24 - 72 hours after the original contact with the Lifeline. (Note: contacts needed sooner than 24 hours are often done as part of a safety check outreach call and are particularly helpful for those who need additional support and do not want/need to go to an ER. People who receive safety check calls can also be asked for consent to participate in a follow-up program once the period of immediate safety is no longer a concern).
- Individuals who have consented to follow-up should receive a minimum of 2 follow-up contacts.
- At least three attempts should be made to reach the individual if the individual is not reached for a scheduled conversation.
- At a minimum in each follow-up contact: Assess the individual's current well-being and suicide risk, review and update safety plan as needed, coordinate care with other providers, and increase connection to needed services.

Please note that these National Lifeline requirements are not final and may be subject to change.

PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Incorporated Name of Applicant: _____

Type: Public _____ **Profit** _____ **Non-Profit** _____ **Hospital-Based** _____

Federal ID Number: _____ **Reg. Number** _____

DUNS Number: _____

Address of Applicant: _____

Chief Executive Officer Name: _____

Chief Executive Officer Title: _____

Phone No.: _____ **Email:** _____

Contact Person Name and Title: _____

Phone No.: _____ **Email:** _____

Total dollar amount requested: _____

Minimum number of 988 calls to be answered annually: _____

Minimum number of 988 chats/texts to be answered annually: _____

NOTE: In order to contract with the State of New Jersey, all providers applying for contracts, or responding to a Request for Proposals or a Request for Letters of Interest, *MUST* be pre-registered with the online eProcurement system known as NJSTART. You may register your organization by proceeding to the following web site: www.nj.gov/transportation/business/procurement/njstart.shtm. Or via telephone: (609) 341-3500.

Authorization: Chief Executive Officer (printed name): _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____