

**WASHINGTON STATE OFFICE OF PUBLIC DEFENSE
711 South Capitol Way, Suite 106
Olympia, WA 98501-1293**

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
RFQ24008
FOR
PREFILING REPRESENTATION PROGRAM**

PURPOSE

Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) will contract with Washington State solo practitioners or firms that will provide prefiling legal representation to pregnant parents and parents of newborns at risk of removal by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

The approximate annual compensation for a full-time attorney is \$182,134. The approximate annual compensation for a full-time Social Service Worker/Social Worker or Parent Ally is \$87,600. Part-time attorney and Social Service Worker/Social Worker or Parent Ally position compensation is pro-rated based upon a full-time caseload of a minimum of 160 hours per month. Compensation includes all overhead such as support staff, rent, and other costs of doing business. If interested, follow the application procedures below.

BACKGROUND

The OPD Parents Representation Program (PRP) currently provides state funded attorney representation and case support services to indigent parents, custodians and legal guardians involved in child dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings in Washington counties. The PRP Purpose Statement is: Ensuring a fair and equitable child welfare system by leading, administering, and supporting the effective and efficient delivery of multidisciplinary right-to-counsel services for indigent parents facing state intervention in the parent-child relationship.

The Washington Legislature passed a budget proviso during the 2023 legislative session to provide funds to the Washington State Office of Public Defense to contract with Washington State solo practitioners or firms for the purpose of providing prefiling representation. The solo practitioners or firms will provide prefiling legal representation to pregnant parents and parents of newborns at risk of removal by DCYF.

The components of the Prefiling Representation Program may include:

1. Outreach and support to parents who are pregnant or recently postpartum who are at risk of child abuse or neglect reports or investigations.
2. Resources that educate parents about the child welfare system they must navigate in order to keep their child(ren) in their care or have their child(ren) returned, including tools they need to be successful with their case plan and information that helps parents understand and support the needs of their child(ren).
3. Ongoing individual support to help parents involved with the child welfare system, including, but not limited to, assistance with navigating the legal system and DCYF involvement prior to the filing of a dependency petition.
4. Establishing relationships with local medical providers, treatment providers, community service providers, and DCYF stakeholders.

The solo practitioner or firm will provide at least an attorney and a Social Service Worker/Social Worker or Parent Ally, to meet the needs of the count(ies), within available funding resources.

In addition, the solo practitioner or firm will maintain client caseload information on a caseload data service provided by the Washington State Office of Public Defense. The solo practitioner or firm will also maintain client demographic and outcome information.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Applicant must be a Washington state solo practitioner or firm.
- Applicant must have a minimum of five years of experience supporting child welfare involved or at-risk of involvement parents.
- Applicant must have experience providing representation to clients at risk of a dependency case and parents who are pregnant or recently postpartum who are at risk of child abuse or neglect reports or investigations.
- Applicant must set forth a plan for providing pre-filing legal representation in the Applicant's county and any other neighboring counties, if applicable.
- Applicant must put forth a reasonable plan for providing emergent and on-call pre-filing representation.
- Applicant must demonstrate the capacity to collaborate and educate referral sources and the community.
- Applicant must have a willingness to participate in community building, including with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), for referrals to the program, and identification of treatment, medical and housing services.
- Applicant must have a willingness to capture data.

- Applicant must provide case assistance of a Social Service Worker or Social Worker.
- Applicant must include a Lead attorney(s) who shall, at a minimum:
 - i. Be licensed by the WSBA to practice in the State of Washington;
 - ii. Have a minimum of five years of experience with juvenile dependency;
- Applicant must comply with the Washington State Supreme Court caseload limits, the Rules of Professional Conduct, and the Washington State Office of Public Defense Parents Representation Program Social Worker Practice Standards.

Applicants who do not meet these minimum qualifications shall be deemed to be non-responsive and will not be evaluated.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Applicant has developed and provided a free legal clinic and legal representation to the target group, parents at risk of neglect or abuse investigations.
- Applicant has experience developing relationships with local services providers, contracting with county agencies and/or nonprofit organizations.
- Applicant has experience gathering and maintaining data.
- Applicant has experience providing legal advocacy and social worker services to pregnant parents or parents with newborns at risk of family intervention by the child welfare system.
- Preference will be given to applicants providing services to westside rural counties and eastside counties.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this RFQ is subject to the availability of funds and is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about January 1, 2024, and to end on June 30, 2025, with possible amendments extending the period of performance.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications must be submitted no later than October 13, 2023. To apply, email a letter of interest identifying your qualifications and a resume. Letters of interest should also describe applicant's current contracts for public defense or other

representation as well as existing caseload, specifying the number of your current dependency and termination cases, if any.

Email Materials to:

Christopher Grande, Program Assistant
E-mail : Christopher.Grande@opd.wa.gov

Please address any questions to Christopher Grande at the above email address.

OPD reserves the right to amend this Request for Qualifications and reserves the right to refrain from contracting with any and all applicants. This Request for Qualifications does not obligate the state of Washington or OPD to contract for the services specified here.

The Washington State Office of Public Defense vigorously pursues diversity in the work force. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons over 40 years of age, persons of disability, and disabled and Vietnam era veterans are encouraged to apply.