

**PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
**Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Birth to Three System**  
**Comprehensive Early Intervention Service Program**  
**or Deaf / Hard of Hearing Support Provider**  
**Request for Proposals Number OEC-B23-2019**  
**Legislative Authority - IDEA Part C**  
**Connecticut General Statutes Sections 17a-248, 17b-3, 38a-490a**

**General Information**

**A) Introduction**

This is a request for proposals to be considered for a contract with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) as either a Comprehensive Early Intervention Service (EIS) Program or a Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Support Provider as part of the Connecticut Birth to Three System.

Proposers must submit one proposal online in its entirety and click NEXT at the end of the summary page no later than **5:00 p.m. ET on Friday, November 29, 2019**. After that time, the online submission tool will close and no submissions will be accepted, including any already in process.

**B) Definitions**

“Birth to Three System” is the system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities operated in accordance with Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its regulations as well as Connecticut General Statute 17a-248 and its regulations. The Office of Early Childhood is the lead agency administering the Connecticut Birth to Three System. The terms “Birth to Three”, “Early Intervention” and “Part C” all refer to the same system. In Connecticut Medicaid as part of Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) refers to Birth to Three, Part C services as Early Intervention Services (EIS).

All acronyms are spelled-out when used for the first time.

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT)
CT	Connecticut
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
DHH	Deaf / Hard of Hearing
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
EIS	Early Intervention Services
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
LEA	Local Education Agency
OEC	Office of Early Childhood (CT)
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
OSC	Office of the State Comptroller (CT)
POS	Purchase of Service
P.A.	Public Act (CT)
RFP	Request for Proposal
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)

A Comprehensive “EIS Program” is a local direct service early intervention program under contract with the Office of Early Childhood to deliver early intervention services under the terms of the IDEA Part C and 17a-248 C.G.S.

A “DHH Support Provider” is a local direct service program operated under contract with the Office of Early Childhood to complete evaluations and deliver hearing specialty services as a support to a Comprehensive EIS Program under the terms of the IDEA Part C and 17a-248 C.G.S.

“Bidder”, “Proposer”, “Vendor”, “Firm” and “Respondent” refer to a company responding to this Request for Proposal.

“Contract” refers to a legally executed agreement between the Contractor and the OEC which is also referred to as a Purchase of Services Contract or POS Contract and “Contractor” refers to a company that is awarded a contract as a result of this RFP.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) is defined as a competitive procurement process that helps to serve the OEC’s best interests. It also provides vendors with a fair opportunity for their services to be considered. The RFP process being used in this case should not be confused with the Request for Quotation (RFQ) process. With RFPs however, the price is not required to be the determinative factor, although it may be. This RFP states the instructions for submitting proposals, the procedure and criteria by which a vendor will be selected, and the contractual terms by which the OEC proposes to govern the relationship between it and the selected vendor.

### **C) Instructions**

#### Official Agency Contact

For any questions relating to the online submission tool or the content of the RFP proposers must only communicate with the Official Agency Contact, Chris Beott, **via email at [OEC.RFP@ct.gov](mailto:OEC.RFP@ct.gov)**. The OEC reserves the right to appoint an alternate and will post a formal amendment to this RFP on <https://biznet.ct.gov> if that occurs.

#### Mandatory Email Notice of Intent to Apply

In order to obtain a unique link to submit a proposal, any proposer intending to respond to this RFP must **email** a notification of their intent to apply to the Official Agency Contact at [OEC.RFP@ct.gov](mailto:OEC.RFP@ct.gov), no later than 11:59 p.m. ET October 20, 2019. In the email subject use “Program Name - Notice of Intent” where Program Name is the name of the program that may be proposed. In the body of the email the proposer must clearly identify the primary contact person’s name, postal address, telephone number, and email address and whether the application is for a contract as a Comprehensive Early Intervention Service (EIS) Program or a Deaf / Hard of Hearing (DHH) Support Provider.

The notice of intent is non-binding in that the proposer is not required ultimately to submit a proposal. In addition to securing a unique link to the online submission tool, the purpose of the notice is to enable the RFP Team to plan for the volume of proposals and to send interested proposers any new information concerning this RFP.

Proposers are encouraged not to wait until the 20<sup>th</sup> to email notification of their intent to the OEC. Within one full business day of receiving the email notice of intent the OEC will email a unique link to the email address identified in the email. In the email proposers will be asked to confirm receipt.

### Contract Award

While EIS services are billed directly to Medicaid and commercial insurance using a fee for service approach, the award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding for OEC payments not covered by third party payers. The OEC anticipates that the successful proposers that are not currently contracting with the state to provide Birth to Three supports will have contracts written to begin on June 1, 2020 with the expectation that they can begin to take referrals and provide services starting July 1, 2020. The contract end date will be June 30, 2025.

### Eligibility

Private provider organizations (defined as non-state entities that are either nonprofit or proprietary corporations or partnerships) that are or will be registered with the Connecticut Secretary of State to do business in Connecticut, and municipalities are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP. **Individuals who are not a duly formed business entity are ineligible to participate in this procurement.**

### Minimum Qualifications of Proposers

#### *Comprehensive Early Intervention Service (EIS) Program*

To qualify for a contract award as a Comprehensive EIS Program, a proposer must document the following minimum qualifications:

- the person with direct supervision of the program and staff must have at least three years of experience administering a program for children and families under Part C of the IDEA,
- or
- the organization has a history of providing supports to families with children with developmental delays for at least five years.

#### *Deaf / Hard of Hearing (DHH) Support Provider*

To qualify for a contract award, a proposer must document that they have at least one audiologist as an employee who is licensed in Connecticut and who meets the following minimum qualification:

- Five hundred and fifty (550) direct post-graduate contact hours within a two-year period during the past five years with children under age four.

### Timeline

The timeline for this procurement process is as follows and shall be changed only by an amendment to this RFP package. Dates after the submission deadline are target dates only.

Release of RFP - Friday, October 11, 2019

**Mandatory Email Notice of Intent to Apply** - Sunday, October 20, 2019 by 11:59 p.m. ET via email to [OEC.RFP@ct.gov](mailto:OEC.RFP@ct.gov)

Bidders Conference via WebEx: Monday, October 21, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. ET

Deadline for **Email** Questions - Sunday, October 27, 2019 by 11:59 p.m. ET

Anticipated Release of Official Answers – Monday, November 4, 2019 by 5:00 p.m. ET as an amendment to this RFP package

**Proposals due - Friday, November 29, 2019 by 5:00 p.m. ET**

Anticipated Selection of Contractors - December 23, 2019

Anticipated Start of Contract Negotiations - January 6, 2020

Anticipated Start of Contract for New Programs - June 1, 2020

Anticipated Start of Contract for Programs with FY20 Contracts - July 1, 2020

### Bidders Conference

There will be an online bidder's conference on October 21, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. ET. The link and log in credentials will be sent to proposers who submit a timely notice of intent to apply to the Official Agency Contact via email.

### Inquiry Procedures

All questions relating to the content of the RFP and the online submission tool must be received **via email** to the Official Agency Contact by 11:59 p.m. ET on October 27, 2019. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally. All questions received before the deadline will be answered. The OEC will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP, the procurement process or the online submission tool will not be answered. The OEC may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. A formal amendment to this RFP is anticipated to be posted on <https://biznet.ct.gov> not later than 5:00 p.m. ET on November 4, 2019.

### **D) Proposal Format**

Proposals will only be accepted via the online submission tool. Only proposers who email a notification of intent to apply on time will receive a link to the online platform. There are two separate links; one for a contract as a Comprehensive EIS program and one as a DHH Support Provider. Agencies must only submit one. Comprehensive EIS Program will be given the option to designate that they specialize in DHH supports or supporting families with children who have autism.

The bidders conference will be recorded and will serve as instructions for the online submission tool.

### **E) Evaluation of Proposals**

It is the intent of the OEC to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the OEC will conform to its written procedures for Purchas of Service (POS) procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85).

### Screening the Proposals

The online submission tool enforces the required format and style and minimum requirements. The OEC will then screen submissions for completeness and for evidence that supports the truthful assertions.

### *Minimum Submission Requirements*

Submissions are due no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on Friday, 11/29/2019.

- a. The online tool will close automatically once the submission deadline has past. If the submit button has not been clicked, the application will not be accepted. A time stamp is collected for every submission. No versions of applications will be accepted after the submission deadline including any that were in process but not submitted on time.
- b. All required forms and attachments must be successfully uploaded.
- c. Documentation that supports the assertion for the Minimum Quality of Proposers must be entered or uploaded into the submission tool as prompted.

The Department of Social Services will also screen proposers as related to the items regarding Medicaid billing.

Only proposals that are not screened out will be evaluated, rated, and ranked. The review team will reject any proposal if the components required by this RFP are not submitted as directed.

### Evaluation Process for the Proposals

*Review Committee.* The OEC will designate a Review Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Review Committee. The Review Committee shall only evaluate actual proposals and then makes recommendations to the Commissioner of the OEC. The Commissioner will make the final selection. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Review Committee will result in disqualification of the proposer.

Eight people will participate on the review team. This includes a parent of a child who previously participated in the CT Birth to Three System; two OEC staff with expertise in information technology, three OEC staff with expertise in the evidence-based practices being implemented in Connecticut as well as all aspects of Part C of the IDEA, and two OEC staff with expertise in fiscal processes and data. The items in the proposals will be divided amongst the eight members of the team based on their areas of expertise and experience. Each narrative item will have at least two reviewers and the Video submitted for Comprehensive EIS Programs will have three reviewers.

The ratings from each reviewer will be collected, averaged and weighted yielding a total score for each proposal.

*Evaluation Criteria.* The review criteria are the objective standards that the Review Committee will use to evaluate the merits of the proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. The items under each will be evaluated individually and in relation to one another to determine if the agency meets the organizational requirements. Listed are the maximum points (pts) available before weighting.

### Comprehensive EIS Programs

Family-centered (15 pts)	describes effective complaint management systems, cultural effectiveness, clear written communication with families
Leadership (15 points)	describes program director competencies, quality assurance systems, planning for staff development and supervision
Evidence-based (20 pts)	describes readiness to scale up the practices in Connecticut, demonstrates quality practices in video submission
Transition (20 points)	relationships with school districts, describes quality practices that support transition
Fiscal and IT (18 points)	the overall fiscal health of the agency including the sufficiency or availability of funds or other resources necessary to administer a program based on payments by third party payers, systems for collecting and entering timely and accurate data ability to serve towns in the NW or NE corners
Staffing (in points above)	leadership with required experience, sufficient staff from a variety of disciplines to cover towns requested

OR

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Support Providers

Family-centered (20 pts)	describes connecting families, demonstrates cultural effectiveness, guiding principles, clear written communication with families
Leadership (20 points)	describes collaborative partnerships, letter of reference, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program experience, quality assurance systems
Evidence-based (25 pts)	describes adherence to JCIH standards, pediatric equipment in use, purchasing, fitting monitoring and repairing hearing technology, use of tele-practice/tele-health/remote EI
Transition (20 points)	describes relationships with school districts, describes quality practices that support transition
Fiscal and IT (21 points)	financial reports, the overall fiscal health of the agency including the sufficiency or availability of funds or other resources necessary to administer a program based on payments by third party payers, purchasing hearing technology before reimbursement, paying travel related expenses, systems for collecting and entering timely and accurate data, ability to serve towns in the NW, NE and SW parts of the state
Staffing (in points above)	sufficient staff with expertise in DHH services with infants and toddlers to cover the towns requested.

*Contact with Proposers.* Proposers may be asked to supply the committee with additional information either in person or in writing or by phone. The Official Agency Contact will contact proposers. During such contact, proposals may not be supplemented, changed or corrected in any way. No comments about other proposers or proposals will be permitted

*Contractor Selection.* Upon completing its review of proposals, the Review Committee will assign the top ranking proposers to towns requested until there are a sufficient number of programs and type of specialize supports for the number of families anticipated. Two lists of Comprehensive EIS Programs and DHH Support Providers will be presented to the Commissioner. The final selection of successful proposers is at the discretion of the Commissioner. Any proposer selected will be so notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the OEC. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Pursuant to Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Order No. 3, any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the OEC's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and the proposer selection process. It is OEC's intention to notify the successful proposers starting December 23, 2019 and to initiate this engagement as soon as possible thereafter.

*Debriefing.* Within ten business days of receiving notification from the OEC, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Agency Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the ten business days. If unsuccessful proposers still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Agency Contact and request a meeting with the OEC to discuss the evaluation process and their proposals. If held, the debriefing meeting will not include any comparisons of unsuccessful proposals with other proposals. The OEC will schedule and hold the debriefing meeting within fifteen business

days of the request. The OEC will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation of selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.

*Appeal process.* Proposers may appeal any aspect of the OEC's competitive procurement, including the evaluation and proposer selection process. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Commissioner. A proposer may file an appeal at any time after the proposal due date, but not later than thirty business days after an agency notifies unsuccessful proposers about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the thirty days. The filing of an appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reasons for the OEC to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an appeal may be obtained from the Official Agency Contact.

*Contract Execution.* Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the OEC's contracting procedures, which will include approval by the Office of the Attorney General.

### **Process for Awarding Catchment Areas**

The overarching goal of the CT Birth to Three System is to ensure access to high quality early intervention services to the greatest number of families.

Each proposal will include the proposed towns to be covered and the number of children the agency could serve in each town requested. After the review team completes the evaluation of all the proposals, the proposals will be placed in rank order. Three principles are used to allocate towns to each agency to ensure that

- 1) there are not too many agencies in each town so that transition to school districts is more efficient and ensure that each agency receives a sufficient number of referrals to justify doing business in that town, and
- 2) whenever possible at least two comprehensive programs cover each town to offer choice to families;
- 3) whenever possible there are at least two programs that have submitted designation forms indicating that they specialize in supporting families with children that have autism or who are DHH.

The highest ranking agency will receive first choice of towns. The process continues down the list of proposals until the number of programs is sufficient to cover the projected number of families in each town based on the number of records in the Birth to Three data system with a status of pending or eligible and not exited on December 2, 2019.

### **Approval by Agency Head**

After the town assignments are completed the list of programs, scores and proposed towns served will be submitted to the Agency head for approval.