

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc.
Request for Proposal

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc. (ACAP) is accepting proposals from State of Maine licensed Mental Health Professionals (minimum Master's level in Psychology, Social Work, Early Childhood Development or related field) with demonstrated ability and experience working with children birth to 5 and their families, to provide Mental Health consultation services for children, parents and staff at eight (8) Early Care & Education, Head Start and Early Head Start centers and two (2) home base programs located throughout Aroostook County. Services are required nine (9) months for preschool school year programs and eleven (11) months for full-year programs, commencing August 1, 2021, with option of annual renewal available for a 5-year period.

The following basic services are to be provided:

- Evaluation of psychological/developmental functioning of children with interpretation to staff and parents;
- Ongoing classroom observation; technical assistance; staff and parent training; and counseling and guidance services for staff and parents in accordance with program curriculum, practice and Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Consultant must demonstrate strong knowledge of Early Childhood Development, support Head Start and ACAP philosophy regarding appropriate intervention techniques, be sensitive to family culture and beliefs, and work cooperatively with ACAP Early Care & Education leadership team. Hours and availability must be flexible and will vary according to children's needs; some evening hours are necessary for parent/staff meetings or training. Crisis intervention available within the school day, as needed.

Proposals including documentation of staff credentials, must be submitted in sealed envelopes and clearly marked "Mental Health Consultant RFP—Do Not Open" or via e-mail with this statement in the subject line. This announcement is subject in all aspects to the terms and conditions contained in the Request for Proposal. All RFP's must be received before 3:00 pm on June 7, 2021. At that time all bids will be opened at the ACAP office, 771 Main Street, Presque Isle. Contact Sue Powers, ACAP Director of Programs, for more information, 554-4170. Electronic bids are to be submitted to: spowers@acap-me.org with "Mental Health Consultant RFP-DO NOT OPEN" in the subject line.

Required elements of an “Effective Mental Health Consultant” for ACAP Early Care & Education

Head Start Performance Standards require the following:

1302.45 (b) (1-6) Mental Health Consultants: A program must ensure mental health consultants assist:

- (1) the program to implement strategies to identify and support children with mental health and social and emotional concerns;
- (2) teachers to improve classroom management and teacher practices through strategies that include using classroom observations and consultations to address teacher and individual child needs and creating physical and cultural environments that promote positive mental health and social and emotional functioning;
- (3) other staff, including home visitors, to meet children’s mental and social and emotional needs through strategies that include observation and consultation;
- (4) staff to address prevalent child mental health concerns, including internalizing problems such as appearing withdrawn and externalizing problems such as challenging behaviors; and
- (5) in helping both parents and staff to understand mental health and access mental health interventions, if needed;
- (6) in implementation of the policies to limit suspension and prohibit expulsion as described in 1302.17.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified mental health professionals provide services to enrolled children and families, agencies identify individuals with characteristics such as the following:

- Masters level practitioners;
- Knowledge of 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;
- The ability to work with staff to improve their own health and they, in turn, provide supportive services to families, and
- The ability to make appropriate referrals and/or to provide counseling and treatment for children and families with diagnosed problems.

In addition, agencies need to ensure that mental health staff and consultants have and maintain appropriate State and local licenses or certifications.

Contract Requirements

1. Provide ongoing consultation around mental health including behavioral and emotional concerns. Provide recommendations based on observations and input from staff and families.
2. Provide regular/on-going consultation to each of eight (8) ACAP Early Care & Education sites and ACAP home visitors to provide support to staff and/or parents around specific issues that need the expertise of the mental health professional.
3. Upon parent or staff request, and with parental consent, conduct individual child observations to support parents and staff in appropriate interventions to address specific presenting behaviors and/or other mental health issues.
4. Submit required documentation and/or reports to the program within one week of the observation or meeting.

The primary role of the Mental Health Consultant is to assist staff working in ACAP child care, Early Head Start and Head Start in addressing concerns and solving problems regarding either specific children and families or certain elements of their program. The goal of consultation is to help staff and families develop attitudes and skills that enable them to more effectively respond to similar issues in the future.

The Mental Health Consultant must:

- Be well versed on Early Childhood Education best practice;
- Demonstrate knowledge in mental health support for young children;
- Be sensitive to family culture and beliefs;
- Be familiar with issues facing low-income families;
- Provide constructive recommendations;
- Provide guidance to staff and parents in dealing with specific mental health and early childhood issues;
- Provide mental health based training to staff and parents;
- Provide information on and referrals to community mental health resources.
- Support program staff in implementation of Center for Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFEL) approach;
- Submit timely documentation and useful reports;
- Attend quarterly meetings with ACAP management to stay informed and up-dated on agency/program information that affects the relationship.