

The Department for Children, Youth and Families
Justification for a Contract Renewal Authorization with Berkshire Farms Center for Youth
for the Provision of Specialty Prevention Services.

The Department for Children, Youth and Families respectfully requests legislative authorization to enter into a contractual agreement with Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth – Focus on the Future Program, for the provision of Juvenile Justice Prevention Services. The requested contract term is for January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024 for the amount of \$104,653. This is the second and final allowable renewal for this agreement. The total prevention contract amount for Berkshire Farm Center is \$319,492.00.

The Department, in collaboration with the Department of Probation, issued a Request for Proposals for Prevention Services—*RFP-2021-068-- PREVENTION SERVICES* on May 13, 2021 with responses due June 25, 2021. Prevention programming focuses on either preventing children from entering foster care, detention or shortening their stay if placed in either. Children enter care either as a result of abuse, neglect and/or Juvenile Justice involvement.

The Department recognizes the importance and necessity for the development of effective collaborations in order to meet the complex needs of families and children within the shrinking fiscal resources. As such, the RFP issued promoted innovative, creative approaches to meet the needs of children and families and allowed much flexibility for agencies to propose how to most effectively do so. It does require a formal collaborative, whereas the prevention service has a reciprocal relationship with either a Youth Bureau funded, and/or community agency for the children and their families to have diverse, holistic programming of formalized and recreational/community based services. It also requires that all children in the family that are five (5) years and older, must be engaged in at least one consistent recreational or community support activity. The parent/guardians must also be engaged with a community support activity. The idea is that these supports will remain in place for the family when the formal services have ended.

Due to the complex challenges facing families, there are times when Specialty Prevention Services are required to assist families in addressing the safety, permanency and well-being of their children. These specialized services may be a supportive, time limited service to address a specific family member's need or it may be a specialized service which is provided to all family members. These services are designed to prevent the reoccurrence of child abuse/neglect, youth entering or re-entering foster care or to expedite permanency for children and youth in foster care.

Specialty Prevention Services include face to face contact with the family at a minimum once (1) per week, for a minimum of one (1) hour. Such contact must occur at least twice (2) monthly in the family residence. Such services occur in a variety of locations but the family need dictates this. All professionals schedule appointments at the convenience of the family. As the families' designated case planning agency, the provider will be responsible for service coordination amongst any other agencies involved. For those Specialty services which are clinically based, such clinical services must include: assessment, diagnostic testing, clinical and specialized therapies provided by a person who has received a Master of Social Work degree, Master of Mental Health Counseling degree or is a licensed Psychologist. Assessment and clinical services are to include family and individual interviews, contact with collateral agencies, schools, extended family and natural supports and diligent communication with Albany County staff.

Berkshire Farm Center for Youth Focus on the Future Program provides educational and workforce readiness training for youth who are at risk of dropping out of school or in need of services as they prepare to transition to adulthood. This program also provides group workshops to parents of these youth who oftentimes experience the same skills deficiencies. The program targets youth who are 14 age and older (including foster care) and will serve up to six (6) families a year.