

The Department for Children, Youth and Families
Justification for Contract Authorization with Berkshire Farm Center and Services for
Youth for the Provision of Juvenile Justice 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—Home Run Program for the provision of Juvenile Justice Prevention Services. The requested contract term is for January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023 for the amount of \$214,839. This is the first of two allowable renewals for this agreement. The total prevention contract amount for Berkshire Farm Center is \$319,492.

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.

Youth enter the Juvenile Justice system either due to criminal behavior (Juvenile Delinquency) or due to truant, incorrigible, and/or disruptive behaviors beyond parental control (Person in Need of Supervision). Albany County believes that structured services alone are not sufficient and there is a necessary need to expand services to include youth engagement to determine what interests the youth and to be able to connect them through community services, employment and skill training, and recreational connections. Albany County sought a continuum of Juvenile Justice preventive services designed as an alternative to detention and foster care to reduce the utilization of detention services, increase delinquency prevention and decrease youth arrests. This will ultimately prevent youth from entering foster care, expedite permanency for youth in foster care, and reduce recidivism.

Juvenile Justice 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.

Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth's Home Run Program is an intensive client centered, family focused school, community, and home-based truancy prevention program for at-risk youth. The program provides an array of services, including assessments, crisis intervention, individual and family counseling, and linkages to recreational activities and community supports.

The Home Run Program will operate at participating schools in the following School Districts: City of Cohoes, City of Watervliet, Green Island, South Colonie and Guilderland. The target population is youth and families who are at-risk for out-of-home placement due to a presenting issue of truancy. The goals of the Home Run Program are to reduce the incidence of truancy; improve the social, emotional, and academic competencies of youth; reduce negative youth behaviors such as violence and crime; empower youth and families in all aspects of service delivery; increase parental involvement in school and in the community; and provide families with the skills and resources they need so youth will remain successfully in their homes and communities. Berkshire Farm Center and Services or youth Home run program would provide services for up to twenty (20) Albany County families.