

**The Department for Children, Youth and Families**  
**Justification for Contract Authorization with St. Catherine's Center for Children**  
**for the Provision of Clinical Prevention Services with Community and Recreational Supports**

The Department for Children, Youth and Families respectfully requests legislative authorization to enter into a contractual agreement with St. Catherine's Center for Children—BKW Connections Program for the provision of Clinical Prevention Services. The requested contract term is for January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021 for the amount of \$181,004. The total prevention contract amount for St. Catherine's Center for Children is \$614,040. The Department desires to exercise its second and final option under the contract, to renew the agreement.

The Department, in collaboration with the Department of Probation, issued a Request for Proposals for Prevention Services—*RFP-2018-063-- PREVENTION SERVICES: Juvenile Justice Services, Clinical Services with Community and Recreational Supports, and Specialty Services* on May 17, 2018 with responses due June 29, 2018. 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.

Many families and their children have been impacted by complex trauma, suffer from mental health issues, substance abuse issues and domestic violence. These children are either at significant risk of foster care placement or have been placed in foster care. It is necessary for Albany County to have creative and strategic programming that intervenes with the family immediately, assists the children and works with the foster care system inclusive of Family Court and Child Protective Services to expedite permanency and increase family functioning.

Clinical Prevention Services with Community and Recreational Supports include: assessment, diagnostic testing, case 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 include family and individual interviews, contact with collateral agencies, schools, extended family and natural supports and diligent communication with Albany County staff. The therapist meets with the family/family members a minimum of once per week, for a minimum of 1 hour, and are available to the family during any crisis situation. Clinical Services occur in a variety of locations, but the family need dictates this. Clinical services occur in the family residence at least twice per month. All professionals schedule appointments at the convenience of the family.

St. Catherine's Center for Children—BKW Connections Program proposes to continue to serve the children, ages four (4) to thirteen (13), who attend one of the region's elementary and/or middle schools, and their families of the Berne-Knox-Westerlo region of Albany County. These students are at risk of foster care placement due to struggling with inappropriate behaviors at school, which may inevitably reflect unaddressed familial challenges including substance abuse or mental health concerns and/or domestic violence. BKW Connections Program is an evidence-based prevention program (utilizes Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral therapy) model, which will include assessment, diagnostic testing, clinical services and an afterschool children's group. It is operated in collaboration with the BKW School District and Albany County, and was initially implemented to meet the unmet needs of children at risk of, or in foster care and their families in this underserved area. This program will serve fifteen (15) families at one time.