

State of Nebraska
Department of Health and Human Services
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

SOLICITATION NUMBER	RELEASE DATE
RFI Warmline	November 12,2024
OPENING DATE AND TIME	PROCUREMENT CONTACT
December 23, 2024 2:00 p.m. Central Time	Dhinesh Santhakumar

This form is part of the specification package and must be signed in ink and returned, along with information documents, by the opening date and time specified.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

SCOPE OF SERVICE

The State of Nebraska (State), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Children and Family Services (CFS) Division is issuing this Request for Information RFI Warmline for the purpose of gathering information to implement a third-party Warmline service to prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement.

Written questions are due no later than November 22, 2024, and should be submitted via e-mail to dhhs.rfpquestions@nebraska.gov .

To facilitate the response review process the entire RFI response must be submitted by the RFI due date and time.

DISCLAIMER: This notice is for informational purposes only. This is not a request for proposal or quote. It does not constitute a solicitation and shall not be construed as a commitment by the State of Nebraska. Responses in any form are not offers and the State of Nebraska is under no obligation to award a contract as a result this announcement. No funds are available to pay for the preparation of responses to this announcement. Any information submitted by respondents is strictly voluntary.

INTRODUCTION: Responses to the Request for Information (RFI) may be used to formulate final requirements and/or to identify qualified vendors capable of meeting those requirements. The description herein outlines preliminary requirements envisioned in the Warmline services for the State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Child and Family Services (CFS). The information gathered may be used to formulate acquisition strategies for competitive solicitations.

RESPONDENT MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING

By signing this Request For Information form manually in ink or by DocuSign, the respondent guarantees compliance with the provisions stated in this Request for Information.

FIRM: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ FAX NUMBER: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

TYPED NAME & TITLE OF SIGNER: _____

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I. SCOPE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The State of Nebraska, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Child and Family Services (CFS), is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) Warmline, for the purpose of gathering information to implement a third party Warmline service to prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement.

ALL INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THIS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE INTERNET AT: <http://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/purchasing.html>

A. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The State expects to adhere to the tentative procurement schedule shown below. It should be noted, however, that some dates are approximate and subject to change.

ACTIVITY		DATE/TIME
1	Release Request for Information	November 12, 2024
2	Last day to submit written questions: DHHS.rfpquestions@nebraska.gov	November 22, 2024
3	State responds to written questions through Request for Information “Addendum” and/or “Amendment” to be posted to the internet at: http://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/purchasing.html	December 6, 2024
4	RFI DUE – Online Via Webex IT IS THE RESPONDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO UPLOAD ELECTRONIC FILES BY DUE DATE AND TIME. EXCEPTIONS WILL NOT BE MADE FOR TECHNOLOGY ISSUES ShareFile Electronic Proposal Submission Link: https://nebraska.sharefile.com/r-r4e2dad0b39794018bd76ce1e24c1d65d Join Webex Meeting: https://sonvideo.webex.com/sonvideo/j.php?MTID=md56533b5116981ebd61127b3a62b1d8f Join by meeting number Meeting number (access code): 2495 353 6007 Meeting password: hsPwnMVW668	December 23, 2024 2:00 PM Central Time
5	Conduct oral interviews/presentations and/or demonstrations (if required)	To Be Determined

II. RFI RESPONSE PROCEDURES

A. OFFICE AND CONTACT PERSON

Responsibilities related to this Request for Information reside with the State Purchasing Bureau. The point of contact for the RFI is as follows:

Name: Dhinesh Santhakumar
Agency: DHHS Office of Procurement and Grants
Address: Nebraska State Office Building
301 Centennial Mall South, 5th Floor
Lincoln, NE 68509
Telephone: 402-471-5031
E-Mail: dhhs.rfpquestions@nebraska.gov

B. GENERAL INFORMATION

A subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP) may not be issued as a result of this RFI. There will not be a contract as a result of this RFI and the State is not liable for any cost incurred by vendors in replying to this RFI. If an RFP is issued, the information provided will assist the State of Nebraska in developing the Request for Proposal. This RFI does not obligate the State to reply to the RFI responses, to issue an RFP, or to include any RFI provisions or responses provided by vendors in any RFP.

C. COMMUNICATION WITH STATE STAFF

From the date the Request for Information is issued and until the RFI opening (as shown in the Schedule of Events), contact regarding this RFI between potential vendors and individuals employed by the State should be restricted to written communication with the staff designated above as the point of contact for this Request for Information.

The following exceptions to these restrictions are permitted:

1. Written communication with the person(s) designated as the point(s) of contact for this Request for Information;
2. Contacts made pursuant to any pre-existing contracts or obligations; and
3. State-requested presentations, key personnel interviews, clarification sessions, or discussions.

Violations of these conditions may be considered sufficient cause to reject a vendor’s response to the RFI. No individual member of the State, employee of the State, or member of the Interview Committee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFI. The State of Nebraska will issue any clarifications or opinions regarding this RFI in writing.

D. WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Any explanation desired by a vendor regarding the meaning or interpretation of any Request for Information provision should be submitted in writing to the Department of Health and Human Services and clearly marked “RFI: Warmline Questions”. It is preferred that questions be sent via e-mail to dhhs.rfpquestions@nebraska.gov

It is recommended that Bidders submit questions sequentially numbered, include the RFI reference and page number using the following format.

<u>Question Number</u>	<u>RFI Section Reference</u>	<u>RFI Page Number</u>	<u>Question</u>

Written answers will be provided through an addendum to be posted on the Internet at <https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bid-opportunities.html> on or before the date shown in the Schedule of Events.

E. ORAL INTERVIEWS/PRESENTATIONS AND/OR DEMONSTRATIONS

The Review Committee(s) may conclude that oral interviews/presentations and/or demonstrations are required. All vendors may not have an opportunity to interview/present and/or give demonstrations. The presentation process will allow the vendors to demonstrate their RFI offering, explaining and/or clarifying any unusual or significant elements related to their response.

Any cost incidental to the oral interviews/presentations and/or demonstrations shall be borne entirely by the vendor and will not be compensated by the State.

F. SUBMISSION OF RESPONSE

The following describes the requirements related to the RFI submission, handling and review by the State.

To facilitate the response review process the entire RFI response must be submitted by the RFI due date and time.

The State is only accepting electronic responses submitted in accordance with this RFI. The State will not accept responses by mail, email, voice, or telephone, unless otherwise explicitly stated in writing by the State.

It is the responsibility of the vendor to check the website for all information relevant to this RFI to include addenda and/or amendments issued prior to the opening date. The website can be found here: <https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bidopps.html>

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR RESPONSE:

1. Succinct, thoughtful responses to the requirements/questions listed in this RFI.
2. Information that address the State's requirements, assumptions, conditions, or contemplated approaches to this requirement.
3. Information and suggestions that may encourage new, different, or innovative approaches that would result in products, solutions, and direct savings to the State of Nebraska.

A separate sheet must be provided that clearly states which sections have been submitted as proprietary or have copyrighted materials. RFI responses should reference the request for information number and be sent to the specified address. Please note that the address label should appear as specified on the face of each container. If a recipient phone number is required for delivery purposes, 402-471-5031 should be used. The Request for Information number must be included in all correspondence.

G. PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Data contained in the response and all documentation provided therein, become the property of the State of Nebraska and the data become public information upon opening the response. If the vendor wishes to have any information withheld from the public, such information must fall within the definition of proprietary information contained within Nebraska's public record statutes. All proprietary information the vendor wishes the state to withhold must be submitted in a sealed package, which is separate from the remainder of the response. The separate

package must be clearly marked PROPRIETARY on the outside of the package. Vendor may not mark their entire Request for Information as proprietary. Failure of the vendor to follow the instructions for submitting proprietary and copyrighted information may result in the information being viewed by other vendors and the public. Proprietary information is defined as trade secrets, academic and scientific research work which is in progress and unpublished, and other information which if released would give advantage to business competitors and serve no public purpose (see Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-712.05(3)). In accordance with Attorney General Opinions 92068 and 97033, vendors submitting information as proprietary may be required to prove specific, named competitor(s) who would be advantaged by release of the information and the specific advantage the competitor(s) would receive. Although every effort will be made to withhold information that is properly submitted as proprietary and meets the State's definition of proprietary information, the State is under no obligation to maintain the confidentiality of proprietary information and accepts no liability for the release of such information.

H. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OPENING

The sealed responses will be publicly opened and the responding entities announced on the date, time, and location shown in the Schedule of Events. Responses will be available for viewing by those present after the opening. Vendors may also contact the state to schedule an appointment for viewing RFI responses.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF WORK

A. PURPOSE

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) is seeking information about how a third-party statewide single access point could be implemented via a "Warmline" to strengthen Nebraska families by safely reducing the need for intervention and system involvement. The desired outcome is to prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement by strengthening families, communities and cultural groups through early intervention and supportive resources to reduce trauma to families.

The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) intends to expand accessible services and programs to support families outside of formal CFS involvement while focusing on prevention; this will include enhancing all categories within the continuum of prevention and intentional efforts to address disparities in race, class, and geographic access. DHHS is focused on providing the right services at the right time to the right families and to preventing unnecessary system entry.

The establishment of a third-party Warmline means that CFS can maintain its focus on core child protection duties while the Warmline addresses upstream activities that can prevent child welfare involvement altogether. Potential contracting for the Warmline allows for a more effective and trusted service, ultimately leading to better outcomes for families and the child welfare system.

B. BACKGROUND / HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The current business practice when a report is screened out by the DCFS Hotline, does not include a uniform process for reviewing calls that are screened out by the Hotline or to determine which screened out reports are appropriate to be sent to the community response pathway for outreach.

The current business practice within child welfare reflects most services are provided after maltreatment is reported, and an investigation is initiated, rather than on "front door" primary prevention prior to child welfare intervention. At times, there is a lack of collaboration among

partners in primary/community-based prevention further limiting family awareness and access to local services and resources.

The current business practice of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) in Nebraska is limited to referring evidence-based programs (EBP) only to families that are currently working with CFS and families that have exited CFS but voluntarily continue to engage in the EBP.

CFS business practice engages system partners, parents, families, youth, and others in various initiatives and ensures stakeholders are actively involved in discussions and development of DHHS initiatives, including evaluation of DHHS goals and developing future Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) goals. Prevention and preserving families by providing access to support, funding, and navigation through a community pathway prior to a crisis that would require CFS intervention, is a priority of the CFS as identified in its 2025-2029 CFSP.

Through research and feasibility determination of a Warmline, it is recognized that Nebraska offers a continuum of universal prevention services, targeted community-based services, child welfare services and prevention initiatives for children and families within child welfare and outside of child welfare, but not through a centralized access point. Referrals to community resources are contingent on knowledge of the resources/services; there is a limitation on thorough education of community resources due to there not being a centralized access point for families to contact to request resources/services in their local communities.

In 2022, the Nebraska legislature passed Legislative Bill 1173, which tasked the three branches of government to work together to transform child and family well-being. In 2023, statewide community forums and listening sessions were held. Information and input gathered during these sessions created a broader network of partners to collaborate within a manner that promotes shared ownership and outcomes. Prevention, diversity in funding, co-creation with lived expertise, quality staff training, equity in service delivery, partner collaboration and shared outcome measures all rose as repeating themes, that will be focus areas during the 2025-2029 period.

Data analysis determined the majority of CFS hotline calls in Nebraska is due to physical neglect, which can be related to or mistaken for poverty, mental illness and financial stress. Most of these reported cases have children and families that can benefit by support in the community in which they live. As a result of the LB 1173 work and analyses, formal recommendations were submitted to the Nebraska Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee, which included the recommendation to enhance primary prevention strategies by creating a main prevention entry point through a Community Response Pathway, so that local resources can be utilized before a family reaches crisis and potential child welfare system involvement.

C. INTENDED IMPACT OF CHILD WELFARE PREVENTION

The Warmline will be a statewide toll-free number, available 24/7, 365 days/year, established and staffed by a neutral third-party operator, that serves as a single point of contact for Nebraska families and community callers to receive information and/or referrals to resources/services to meet the individual family needs and connect families with appropriate support services in the family's community.

Any future solicitation would be structured to have the vendor be responsible for the call center intake operations, including screening and information gathering, as well as navigation services to provide a closed-loop referral system ensuring that families are supported through confirmation of access to the necessary services.

Providing this service internally at CFS, carries the risk of reducing trust with the families, as they may be hesitant to call CFS directly due to the stigma associated with child welfare involvement. This could delay assistance seeking and potentially exacerbate problems.

The intention of outsourcing the Warmline is to remove stigma associated with contacting CFS directly; creating a safe space to encourage families to call and seek help without fear of judgement or intervention before problems escalate.

D. SCOPE OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Please provide a detailed response that not only addresses the specific questions outlined directly below but also offers a holistic solution to the problem, including any innovative approaches or strategies you would employ.

1. Explain in detail your holistic solution to the problem and include any similar projects worked on in the past, if they were successful, and lessons learned.
2. How would you evaluate the Warmline is meeting the goals of keeping children safely in their homes and communities?
3. How could your solution align the most relevant resources more effectively and provide links to services and concrete supports for families within their own communities?
4. How your solution will engage tribal nations, community members and stakeholders in the planning and outcomes of the Warmline.
5. How would your solution establish a structured process to collaborate with existing intersectoral groups to support the community-based prevention system?
6. What is current methodology to ensure that your staff is well trained and has a connection to community-based needs and resources.?
7. How would you ensure staff are trained to utilize a standardized process to screen callers and identify their needs and urgency level to ensure families with the most critical needs receive priority?
8. How would your solution ensure respect for and inclusivity of diverse families, including their ethnicities, cultural traditions, languages, values, socioeconomic status, family structures, religion and spirituality, individual abilities, immigration status, and other characteristics?
9. How would your solution establish rapport with callers through empathetic listening and non-judgmental support to foster trust and encourage families to openly discuss their challenges?
10. Describe the capabilities that you have to provide information and referrals in multiple languages to meet the diverse linguistic needs of families.
11. How would your solution connect families with appropriate education and support services within their communities?

- 12.** How would your solution provide information to educate callers and what content would educate professional callers including but not limited to:

 - Local resources available to families
 - The operation of the Warmline and how families can connect with services
 - What families can expect when working with community-based prevention services
 - Skills and techniques for approaching families to offer support
 - Techniques for engaging families to improve their connection with a service
- 13.** How would your solution maintain an updated database of community-based resources to ensure families are connected with the most relevant and effective support in their communities?
- 14.** What procedures will your staff follow to conduct follow-ups with families after referrals, and how will further assistance be provided if needed?
- 15.** How would your solution collaborate with the CFS Hotline to establish a process that ensures appropriate confidentiality protections while providing a pathway for families identified by the Hotline to be assessed for service referrals and resource education?
- 16.** How would your solution collaborate with CFS, using appropriate confidentiality protections, to identify families referred for evidence-based programs approved under the Nebraska FFPSA Plan?
- 17.** What follow-up processes would you implement to ensure that families are able to connect with services after referrals, and how would additional assistance be provided if needed?
- 18.** How would your solution support a closed-loop referral system that facilitates interoperable referrals to entities capable of accepting them, while also enabling families to self-navigate? Additionally, how would this system contribute to standardized reporting on outcomes?
- 19.** What plans does your solution have to establish and utilize a qualitative survey for callers to complete at the end of a call, and how would this information be provided to CFS?
- 20.** What data and outcomes measures would you use to assess the effectiveness?
- 21.** How would you submit regular reports that include call data, referral statistics, and qualitative feedback from callers?

Form A
Vendor Contact Sheet

Request for Information: Warmline

Form A should be completed and submitted with each response to this solicitation document. This is intended to provide the State with information on the vendor's name and address, and the specific persons who are responsible for preparation of the vendor's response.

Preparation of Response Contact Information	
Vendor Name:	
Vendor Address:	
Contact Person & Title:	
E-mail Address:	
Telephone Number (Office):	
Telephone Number (Cellular):	
Fax Number:	

Each vendor shall also designate a specific contact person who will be responsible for responding to the State if any clarifications of the vendor's response should become necessary. This will also be the person who the State contacts to set up a presentation/demonstration, if required.

Communication with the State Contact Information	
Vendor Name:	
Vendor Address:	
Contact Person & Title:	
E-mail Address:	
Telephone Number (Office):	
Telephone Number (Cellular):	
Fax Number:	