

# **Request for Proposals**

## **Homeless Hotline**

**January 12, 2018**

**Community Shelter Board  
111 Liberty Street, Suite 150  
Columbus, OH 43215**

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# Part 1: Request for Proposals

## 1. Purpose

Community Shelter Board (CSB) is seeking proposals for the Homeless Hotline for FY 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). CSB may, at its discretion, renew funding for the Homeless Hotline as part of the annual Gateway funding process.

The Homeless Hotline provides crisis response call center operations for coordinated entry for the Columbus and Franklin County homeless system. Coordinated entry is a consistent, streamlined process for accessing the resources available in the homeless crisis response system. Through coordinated entry, our community also ensures that the highest need, most vulnerable households are prioritized for services and that system resources are used efficiently and effectively.

The coordinated entry system must be easy for people to access; identify and assess people's needs; and make prioritization decisions and referrals based on those needs. The Hotline refers people experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness to various community resources and programs. Homeless Hotline staff will work with partners in the homelessness system and participate in the community's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

## 2. Target Population

The Homeless Hotline serves individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness who call the Homeless Hotline phone number (1-888-4-SHELTR).

## 3. Program Specifications

### a. Homeless Hotline Program Requirements and Standards

The successful applicant will meet and adhere to the below program specifications and other applicable CSB Partner Agency standards throughout the term of the award. Applicants must develop the Homeless Hotline Program in a manner consistent with this RFP and CSB's [Partner Agency Standards](#).

### b. Coordinated Entry Core Components

The Hotline will use a phone-based standardized screening and assessment process to gather information on people's needs and the housing barriers they face. The Hotline will then follow established guidelines and procedures to prioritize households for referral to appropriate resources, alternative options, or emergency shelter. The applicant and CSB will develop and maintain detailed Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures that will guide implementation of each of the components described below.

#### Access

The coordinated entry process covers the entire geographic area of Columbus and Franklin County.

- < The Hotline must operate 365 days per year during the hours of 7 am and 11 pm, and must coordinate with CSB's designated partner for after-hours coverage.
- < The Hotline must answer calls within 5 minutes.
- < The Hotline must collaborate with emergency shelter staff and use HMIS to manage shelter bed lists.

- < The Hotline must collaborate with domestic violence assistance providers to serve persons who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and/or stalking.
- < The Hotline must ensure privacy protections are established and enforced for all callers from the first point of access.
- < The Hotline must use efficient automated means for initial caller triage that reduces the need for Call Specialist intervention. For example, the Hotline should use automated prompts to identify callers' need for emergency shelter that night.

### Assessment

The assessment process determines how people are screened for emergency shelter eligibility and referred to emergency shelter or other resources. Where necessary, additional screening will be conducted to prioritize people for emergency shelter or other resources.

- < The Hotline must use one standardized assessment tool approved by CSB. The tool must be consistent for all callers, but some questions can be tailored for adults without children; adults accompanied by children; unaccompanied youth; households fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, or other life-threatening situations; and persons at risk of homelessness.
- < Assessments must use culturally and linguistically competent practices that take into account the needs of various sub-populations, including immigrants, youth, and LGBTQ persons.
- < The assessment must include explanation of diversion opportunities (i.e., alternatives to emergency shelter), with the aim of preventing people from becoming homeless. The Hotline must only refer callers to shelter when there are no other safe housing options and/or resources to immediately secure such options.

### Prioritization

In Columbus and Franklin County, families with children, pregnant women, and veterans who are experiencing literal homelessness are prioritized for emergency shelter. If eligible, they always receive a shelter bed and are never turned away. Single adults who are experiencing homelessness are placed on a waiting list when the demand for shelter beds exceeds availability, except during overflow season (November through March) when everyone who needs shelter and is eligible is given access to a shelter bed. The Hotline and emergency shelters use HMIS to manage shelter bed lists and assign people to beds, based on prioritization and availability.

### Referral

Based on system assessment and prioritization policies and procedures, the Hotline will refer each caller to the appropriate intervention.

- < The Hotline must use a standardized disposition and referral protocol approved by CSB that assures timely, accurate, and successful diversion from or admission to emergency shelter.
- < The Hotline must comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of federal civil rights laws. The Hotline must conduct warm transfers (i.e., personal transfers) for specified providers, such as providers of domestic violence services and youth under 18 years old.
- < When diversion efforts are successful, the Hotline must refer callers to community supports and programs that can help the person sustain housing (e.g., utility assistance, child care referrals, employment support, etc.).
- < When callers are referred to emergency shelter, the Hotline must assign the caller to an appropriate shelter bed in HMIS.
- < The Hotline must coordinate with targeted diversion and homelessness prevention programs for families with children and pregnant women who are at imminent risk of homelessness.
- < When needed, the Hotline must help callers arrange transportation (e.g., bus passes, taxis).

### c. Program Staffing, Training, and Supervision

The program must employ a sufficient number of Call Specialists to ensure a maximum wait time of 5 minutes for callers. Call Specialists will:

- < Assess callers using the standardized assessment tool.
- < Prioritize callers based on established prioritization standards.
- < Refer callers to the most appropriate intervention, based on established policies and procedures.
- < Help callers arrange transportation options if needed.
- < Enter caller data accurately, comprehensively, and in a timely manner in HMIS, according to CSB policies and procedures.
- < Maintain caller privacy and the confidentiality of personal information, according to CSB policies and procedures.
- < Maintain awareness of community resources and programs to support people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- < Maintain up-to-date understanding of the various programs' entry requirements and population emphasis (e.g., youth programs, mental health resources, domestic violence support, etc.).

Applicants should propose the number of Call Specialists they believe can be supported with available funding, after accounting for other necessary staffing and program costs. Applicants should describe a staffing plan that will assure full staffing and ongoing compliance with all hotline requirements, policies, and procedures (e.g., over-hiring based on expected staff turnover to ensure consistent staffing). Applicants should describe **in detail** their plan to ensure that wait times are 5 minutes or less.

All program staff will have appropriate education, experience, and training necessary to provide high quality services. Applicants must describe in the proposal the training each Call Specialist will receive upon hire and periodically thereafter, along with the timelines within which this training will be completed (e.g., within 90 days of hire, annually).

The applicant and CSB will also develop and maintain detailed Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures that will guide the work of Call Specialists.

### 4. Qualifications and Performance

CSB has robust data, monitoring, and performance evaluation capabilities. The Homeless Hotline will be evaluated based on performance outcomes and compliance with [CSB's Partner Agency Standards](#). The agency should have experience with providing call center services, including sufficient management oversight and quality control.

The successful applicant will be required to develop and implement an ongoing program performance plan, including development of a monthly performance dashboard, by September 30, 2018. CSB will work with the successful applicant to develop a Program Outcomes Plan (POP) using the following performance measures overall and for CSB-determined sub-populations:

- < Households served
- < Successful diversion outcomes
- < Shelter referrals
- < Wait times

## 5. Contract Amount and Terms

The estimated funding amount (pending CSB Board and Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative approval) for the Homeless Hotline in FY 2019 is \$446,390.

## 6. Schedule

Dates	Activities
01/12/18	Request for proposals released
1/26/18, 1pm – 3pm	Bidders' conference
1/29/18 – 2/9/18	Up to 2 hours of technical assistance available to each proposer via appointment
<b>2/23/18</b>	<b>Completed proposals due to CSB by 5 pm</b>
2/26/18 – 3/23/18	Applicant one-on-one interviews
4/6/18	Award announcement
5/18/18	CSB Board approval of funding decisions
6/18	Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative approval of funding decisions
5/23/18 – 6/15/18	FY 2019 contract issuance with 7/1/18 effective date
4/9/18 – 6/30/18	Development and finalization of tools and protocols in consultation with CSB Development and finalization of monthly dashboard in consultation with CSB

## 7. Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed based upon the following:

- < Administrative Capacity: Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with CSB Partner Agency Standards? Does the applicant have the capacity to track and invoice costs correctly? Does the applicant demonstrate the experience and capacity to achieve the goals and objectives described in the RFP?
- < Application Completeness: Is the RFP responsive? Is the application complete?
- < Program Design: To what extent is the project design clear, reasonable, and consistent with coordinated entry core components, practice standards, and RFP requirements? Does the applicant adequately describe the project? Are staff training and supervision approached adequate and consistent with requirements?
- < Cost Efficiency: To what extent is the requested budget reasonable? Are project costs adequately explained and reasonable?

## **8. Submission Requirements**

Completed and signed applications must be submitted electronically to CSB Grants Administrator Heather Notter ([hnotter@csb.org](mailto:hnotter@csb.org)) no later than **5pm on February 23, 2018**.