



MARYLAND  
FAMILY  
NETWORK

*Leading Maryland's  
Family Support Centers*

# Maryland Family Network, Inc.

## Request for Proposals for Family Support Center

**Target areas:  
Unserved and Underserved Jurisdictions of Maryland**

Issue Date: July 16, 2020

Funding Partners: Maryland State Department of Education  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS**

### **1.1 Background and Purpose**

Maryland Family Network and Maryland's Network of Family Support Centers (FSCs) represent the pursuit of a vision to address some of the state's most pressing social problems by putting into place a front-end prevention mechanism to the state's crisis-oriented human services delivery system. The specific catalysts for the creation of FSCs nearly 35 years ago were the state's skyrocketing reports of child abuse and neglect and resulting foster care placements, its high teenage pregnancy rate and growing recognition of the relationships between adolescent parenting and long-term welfare dependency. Additional catalysts were limited success in education and job attainment and negative outcomes for the children of teenagers.

Since its beginning, the goal of FSCs has been to provide comprehensive, culturally-sensitive, community-based, preventive services to families who live in neighborhoods that show high concentrations of a variety of risk factors known to be predictive of long-term welfare dependency and poverty.

Undergirding Maryland's Family Support initiative is the belief that responsibility for supporting families must be shared by families, their neighbors, and public and private institutions at the local, state, and federal levels. Since the opening of the first four Centers in 1986, many State agencies have contributed support to the initiative including the Department of Human Services, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Governor's Office for Children. Federal funders, private foundations, corporations, and individual donors have given consistently and generously.

Authority for the Center budget and contract between the State of Maryland and the intermediary, Maryland Family Network, is held by the Maryland State Department of Education. This partnership honors the strong links among family support, early care and education, and adult education.

To implement the concept of the partnership and to ensure the coordinated expansion and enhancement of a network of high-quality services, Maryland Family Network was established by the public and private partners. This intermediary organization provides contract management, resource development and management, network coordination, technical assistance, training, monitoring, and other quality assurance services for Maryland's Family Support Centers. Maryland Family Network is the recipient of the primary funding streams that flow into the Centers and is the entity that enters into the contractual arrangement with the selected applicant.

Maryland Family Network, on behalf of its public and private funders, solicits proposals from public and private nonprofit organizations to develop and operate a Center. Maryland Family Network will fund six lead agencies, each proposing to establish a Center in a Maryland jurisdiction with a high need. Eligible jurisdictions in the State of Maryland include those that are unserved or underserved. Applicants will be selected through a competitive process coordinated by Maryland Family Network, using a Request for Proposals (RFP) document and employing a review panel comprised of experts in fields related to community-based family support services. Proposals must demonstrate a high need for a Center in the targeted community and address plans for the creation and operation of a Center that will have broad community support, both from local agencies and from individuals and families who live and work in the community.

Over the last 30 years, Maryland Family Network has found that the process of bringing people together in a community to discuss plans for a Center and writing a proposal for funding are important steps in creating

comprehensive supports for families of infants and toddlers. Maryland Family Network strongly recommends that prospective applicants begin this work as soon as possible.

**1.2 Funding Amount and Schedule**

Based upon availability of funding, the Center will be funded at a level of \$330,000 annually for core operations. Listed below is a tentative schedule of important dates that pertain to this Request for Proposals (RFP).

<b>Availability of RFP</b>	Thursday July 16, 2020
<b>Pre-proposal Meeting</b>	Wednesday, August 5, 2020
<b>Proposals Due at MFN</b>	Friday September 11, 2020
<b>Selections Announced</b>	Friday October 23, 2020
<b>Contracts Awarded</b>	Friday November 6, 2020
<b>Start-up Period Begins</b>	Monday November 9, 2020
<b>Full Operations Begin</b>	Monday March 1, 2021

**1.3 Virtual Pre-proposal Meetings**

Virtual pre-proposal meetings will be held at 2:00 pm on **Wednesday August 5, 2020** with virtual breakout rooms assigned to specific service sectors; i.e. Not-for Profit, Government, and Other. The purpose of the meetings is to provide answers to questions from potential applicants arising from their review of this RFP. Attendance at the meetings is not mandatory though all interested parties are encouraged to attend in order to submit fully acceptable proposals. Please notify Maryland Family Network if you plan to participate in the virtual conference by contacting Sheila Sinkler at [ssinkler@marylandfamilynetwork.org](mailto:ssinkler@marylandfamilynetwork.org) or 410.659.7701 x136. You will receive login credentials upon registration.

**1.4 Questions about the RFP**

This RFP contains procedural information concerning preparation and submittal of the proposal. Please direct inquiries that relate to the RFP to Melanie Martin, Family Support Network Director at [mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org](mailto:mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org). Questions subsequent to the conference must be submitted in writing and will not be accepted after the inquiry deadline established at the meeting.

**1.5 Closing Submittal Date/Issuing Office**

An original proposal in PDF format must be emailed to Sheila Sinkler [ssinkler@marylandfamilynetwork.org](mailto:ssinkler@marylandfamilynetwork.org) of Maryland Family Network no later than 4:00 pm on **Friday September 11, 2020**.

**1.6 Addenda to the RFP**

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, addenda will be provided to all vendors who requested and/or received the initial RFP.

**1.7 Cancellation of the Contracts**

Under ordinary circumstances, the State will budget funds for the chosen Center from year to year. If the Administration and the Maryland General Assembly or federal government fail to appropriate funds in any future year for any contract resulting from this RFP, Maryland Family Network may terminate the contract at the beginning of the quarter for which no funds or reduced funds have been appropriated.

**1.8 Proposal Description**

Each proposal submitted will be judged on the quality of the proposal's required information described in this RFP.

**1.9 Commitment to Cultural Diversity**

Maryland Family Network, in its work with individuals, families, and communities, respects and supports all people and celebrates diversity. We believe that it is essential for systems and services to be respectful, inclusive, and welcoming of individuals, families, and groups, and strive to include diverse points of view in our decision-making and service provision. An applicant should demonstrate in its proposal a respect for diversity through its systems, practices, and services.

**1.10 Proposal Acceptance**

Maryland Family Network reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, received in response to this RFP, to waive or permit cure of minor irregularities, and to conduct discussions with qualified applicants in order to serve the best interests of Maryland's family support initiative. Applicants may be required to make oral presentations to the Evaluation Committee and Maryland Family Network staff in order to clarify their proposals.

**1.11 Financial Soundness**

The selected contractor must be financially sound and well managed. Each applicant is required to submit with its proposal its last two certified entity-wide audited financial statements, including related management letters, the most recent interim financial statement, and A-133 Single Audit. The selected contractor must be audited annually in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards for financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards issued by the U.S. Comptroller General and, if applicable, OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non Profit Organizations. Audit costs are allowable administrative costs.

**1.12 Alternate Solution Proposals**

Maryland Family Network places great value on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship that help a program efficiently and effectively meet a community's needs. Applicants may "color outside the lines" and propose program variations. If an applicant submits a proposal that does not conform to the design specified in Section II, it must be clearly identified as an Alternate Solution Proposal. To be considered

responsive, Alternate Solution Proposals must clearly meet the intent of the program, offer a design intended to achieve the specified outcomes, and satisfy Maryland Family Network requirements stated in the RFP.

Please contact Maryland Family Network for details if you are considering submission of a program variation by contacting Melanie Martin, Family Support Network Director, by email at [mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org](mailto:mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org) or by telephone at 410-659-7701, ext. 113.

### **1.13 Contractor's Responsibilities**

Maryland Family Network will enter into a contractual agreement with the successful applicant only. The contractor will be responsible for all services required by this RFP. Joint proposals will be accepted only if one party assumes the responsibility of prime contractor. The applicant must identify subcontractors, if any, and explain their role in the work and the need to engage them.

### **1.14 Maryland Family Network's Role**

Maryland Family Network's charge is to administer and coordinate the operation and expansion of Family Support Centers by providing technical assistance, training, monitoring, contract management and quality assurance services. Assistance in the development of the Center and specialized training are provided to ensure that the Centers reflect common goals, principles, and comparable service elements across the Maryland network.

Maryland Family Network's staff members have expertise in infant and early childhood development, adult education, employment readiness, adolescent pregnancy, parent education, home visiting, social work, counseling, health education, community organization, program management and administration. The staff's skills are made available to the Family Support Center through ongoing, regularly scheduled training and targeted on-site technical assistance. Center staff are required to participate in all training arranged by Maryland Family Network.

At least once each year, Family Support Centers' child development programs are monitored using the *Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS)*.

Each Center is monitored at least annually using the On-Site Monitoring Report. This activity provides a snapshot of the Center and a summary of performance in approximately 100 aspects of a Center's operation.

Once a year the Center will participate in a peer review process that brings a team of service providers from one Center to review the operation. Reciprocally, several Center staff will be detailed to visit another Center for the same purpose.

Periodically, Maryland Family Network distributes a questionnaire in the form of a Satisfaction Survey directly to participating parents. This tool, "How Are We Doing?" gathers customer satisfaction data.

Maryland Family Network requires that all grantees participate in the ongoing evaluation of Maryland's Family Support Centers. The MFN Management Information System is a customized, web-based version of myHeadstart. The successful applicant will be connected to myHeadstart and required to use the forms and process developed by Maryland Family Network as part of its quality assurance and evaluation effort.

**1.15 Document Ownership**

In the event of contract award, all documentation produced as part of the contract will become the exclusive property of the funders of this project and may not be copied or removed by an employee of the selected contractor without the written permission of Maryland Family Network. All proposals received from applicants in response to this RFP will become the property of Maryland Family Network and will not be returned to the applicant. Maryland Family Network will have the right to use any or all ideas or adaptation of the ideas presented in any proposal received in response to this RFP. Selection or rejection of any proposal will not affect this right.

**1.16 General Contractual Conditions**

Any contract resulting from this RFP will be executed in conformance with the laws of the State of Maryland and will include, at a minimum, the contractual terms and conditions presented in Exhibit A, a copy of the contract form in use by Maryland Family Network. This document is subject to modification from time to time and contains the terms of the business relationship between Maryland Family Network and the public and private nonprofits that operate the Family Support Centers.

**1.17 Contract Award and Terms**

Award of contract, if any, will be made within ninety days of submission of proposals and will be subject to appropriate federal, State, and Maryland Family Network approvals. The contract will be awarded on a fixed price basis, supported by the required budgets.

The contract award is expected to be made as indicated in the schedule above. A contract for start-up will be awarded on November 9, 2020. **The Center should be fully operational by March 1, 2021. Extra points will be awarded to applicants that demonstrate an ability to be fully operational by February 1, 2021.** MFN will offer a renewal contract to the grantee annually based upon availability of State funding and satisfactory performance.

**1.18 Acceptance of Proposal Content**

At the option of Maryland Family Network, the content of this RFP and the proposal of the successful applicant will be included by reference in any resulting contract. All prices, costs, terms, and conditions in the proposal will remain fixed and valid for ninety days after the proposal due date.

**1.19 Compliance with Law**

By submitting an offer in response to this RFP, the applicant, if selected for award, agrees that it will comply with all Federal, State, and local laws applicable to its activities and obligations under the contract. The Proposal and Contract Affidavit, Exhibit A, must be signed and submitted with the applicant's proposal. Exhibit A contains other certifications that must be executed at the time of award.

**1.20 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions**

By submitting an offer in response to this RFP, the selected contractor will be deemed to have accepted all the terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in the RFP and its Exhibits unless otherwise clearly noted and explained in its proposal.

## II. DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

### 2.1 Background

Family Support Centers are child-centered, family-focused programs that serve young parents together with their children aged birth through three years. These prevention oriented, early intervention programs are offered in warm, friendly, welcoming settings. FSCs often are the first institution on the continuum of school readiness as they play a critical role in the educational development of both the child and parent.

These Centers strive to:

- Promote the full development and general competence of children and reduce the occurrence of emotional, physical, or social handicaps through appropriate preventive services enabling them to arrive at school with the skills and competencies they need to succeed.
- Enhance the quality of parent-child and family interactions in order to improve the competence of parents in their role as caregivers and families as functioning units.
- Provide, or be a link to, services necessary for greater parental self-support and self-sufficiency.
- Serve as a community Center where parents with young children can experience support and establish wholesome connections with others.
- Reduce the incidence of additional pregnancies among young parents and /or delay subsequent pregnancies.

Maryland Family Network and the Centers' underlying principles, the tenets of family support, are:

- A respect for the strengths of families and their individual members and a desire to build on these strengths rather than focus on weaknesses;
- A commitment to families and their individual members becoming empowered so they can help themselves to realize their own goals;
- An acknowledgment of the universal need for family support services, leading to programs without eligibility or "needs-based" requirements;
- A recognition of the necessity to actively involve program participants and community service providers as equal partners in the design and implementation of services; and
- A commitment to understanding the individual parent and child within the context of the larger family, neighborhood, community, city, state, and nation, recognizing the need to affect all of these environments.
- A commitment to the Strengthening Families approach and to building the five Protective Factors that all families need:

1. Parental Resilience

2. Social Connections
3. Concrete Support in Times of Need
4. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
5. Social & Emotional Competence of Children

## **2.2 Purpose, Nature, and Philosophy of Family Support Centers**

Family Support Centers are community-based programs where expectant women and parents – mothers and fathers – with children from birth through age three come together to experience a hospitable and constructive environment that provides or links to those services necessary to support and strengthen families as functioning units. The Centers operate one program for two generations and provide services that promote nurturing and competent parenting, physical and mental health of parents and children, family economic independence, and full growth and development of children. Special efforts are made to target young parents, as they and their children are most vulnerable to the negative consequences of early child bearing.

These Family Support Centers are well-positioned within their communities to support many local efforts that target early childhood, young parents, and neighborhood development. For instance, Family Support Centers assist DSS offices with provision of education and employment services for parents with children, birth through three years of age. Centers work closely with area high schools, sometimes functioning as alternative education or external diploma sites. Centers may be part of Judith P. Hoyer Partnerships and must be connected with Infants and Toddlers (Part C) efforts. Programs may connect with Early Head Start, Head Start, or other early childhood settings. Centers provide as part of their self-sufficiency programming English as Second Language to parents whose first language is not English.

Centers offer structured services in warm, welcoming environments that provide parents with a place in their neighborhood to find support of other parents and professionals, opportunities for learning and recreation, and assistance concerning decisions about family, education, career, and child rearing. Centers must be large enough to accommodate the many activities, some of which are occurring concurrently, that are part of the Family Support Center program.

A basic tenet of the Family Support philosophy is that all people have strengths. Centers continually identify and acknowledge those strengths and establish a formal process of building upon them. Families are not referred to or viewed as "clients," "cases," or "recipients," but as "participants" – partners in deciding and implementing direction for their lives. Prospective participants are therefore to be included in the proposal development process. They are to be involved in the establishment of the Center and serve on the Center's advisory board. The Center is accountable to both customers and funders.

Family Support Centers are sources of support, not just services. They attract participants with differing lifestyles, philosophies, values, and beliefs. It is imperative that Centers welcome and are prepared to serve the full range of people living in the community, meet their individual needs, and permit them to make decisions for themselves and their children that, although they may not conform to the sponsoring agency's philosophy, are legal and acceptable to the larger community.

Proposals must include assurances that participants will be able to access through the Centers a variety of community resources, despite the fact that some of these resources may be incongruent with the personal beliefs of either the sponsoring agency or any member of its staff. This includes providing or referring participants for health care, family planning, and other services and assuring that funds will not be used to teach or promote a particular philosophy or belief.



## 2.3 Program Goals, Service Components, and Indicators of Performance

### **Program Goals**

Maryland's Family Support Centers strive to help:

- Parents fulfill their goals related to school and employment leading to self-sufficiency;
- Parents meet or exceed their goals related to family life; and
- Very young children develop fully, physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively, preparing them to enter school ready to learn.

### **Service Components**

In order to achieve positive outcomes for very young children and their parents and primary caregivers, Centers make available a wide range of services for both parents and children. Some of these services may be provided at the Center or in the home; others may be arranged on a purchase or referral basis from other community agencies. Some operating Centers have co-located with other health and social service agencies in order to assure efficient service provision.

Maryland Family Network and the Family Support Centers have developed a set of required "core services," which periodically changes in response to family needs, public policy, and other conditions. The current core services are:

- ***Self-Sufficiency Programming***  
This core service has three components: adult education, inclusive of classes for English as a Second Language, family literacy and employment readiness activities that may include job related skill development and computer literacy.
- ***Parent Education***  
This set of services is designed to enhance parenting skills for mothers and fathers, and include: formal parent education classes using an evidenced-based curriculum, parenting enhancement activities, informal interactions, role modeling and peer education.
- ***Infant/Toddler Program***  
This set of services includes infant and toddler developmentally appropriate and individualized programming to maximize the child's development and foster positive parent/child relationships that lay the foundation for success in future early childhood settings. Quality developmental care supports the positive growth of children as parents attend activities at the Center. Though optional, infant/toddler programs that provide services in a licensed child care space is optimal.
- ***Service Coordination***  
This core service encompasses coordination of services and appropriate follow-through to help parents identify strengths, set goals, and choose steps that will result in positive change for their children and themselves.
- ***Health Education***

This core service encompasses primary and prenatal health care education, family planning counseling, substance abuse avoidance counseling, mental health consultation, and other health education and screening services to assist participants to make informed, responsible choices related to their family's and their own general and reproductive health care.

- ***In-Home Intervention (Home Visiting)***  
Home visiting is an integral component of a Family Support Center. The goal of the In-Home Intervention program is not only to support high-risk parents in their role as parents by influencing the quality of parent, child, and family interactions but also to recruit parents to participate actively in the Center, removing barriers to Center participation by offering services in the homes of hard-to-reach families. The selected contractor will be expected to hire at least one full-time home visitor who works with pregnant women and families raising children from birth through three or to secure a full-time position through other resources. In addition, use of Parents as Teachers, an evidenced-based curriculum and the requisite training is required.
- ***Participant (Parent) Support and Involvement***  
Participant support activities include recreational and other social events. Empowering young families means providing holistic programming, not only academic and parenting classes, but also other activities and opportunities that advance the development of their personal support systems and the wide range of abilities and interests of participants, including basic life skills, recreation and opportunities to develop leadership and advocacy skills.
- ***Outreach, Collaboration, and Resource Development***  
Outreach and other relationship-building activities are conducted with youth, families, local organizations, and others to ensure community awareness and acceptance of the Family Support Center, involvement in program planning, and participation in Center activities. Collaboration and resource development are necessary for a Family Support Center to grow and thrive.

Centers operate special programs just for fathers and also incorporate services to fathers into regular programming. Applicants should address how offered services will be provided to fathers.

#### **Indicators of Performance**

Maryland Family Network has established standards for quality and performance-based outcome measures. These are monitored regularly through the use of a web-based computerized data collection system and on-site progress reviews. Further management assistance is achieved through regular consultation with the Maryland Family Network Program Consultants assigned to the Center. Below is a summary of some of the key data reported by Centers and monitored by Maryland Family Network.

- ***The number of people who can reasonably be served and the intensity of service***  
Required: for Center-based participants, serve at least 32 families with children from birth through 47 months of age (0-3 years) intensively each month and at least one hundred (100) families with children 0-3 years intensively during the year. In addition, the program will be required to serve at least thirty-two (32) children from birth through 47 months of age (0-3 years) intensively each month and at least one hundred (100) children ages 0-3 years intensively during the year. For this purpose, "intensively" is defined as five or more visits per month.

In addition, a Family Support Center is expected to recruit new participants, at a minimum, on an average of four to five per month.

For home-based participants through the In-Home Intervention program, the Family Support Center is required to serve 35 additional families a year, maintaining a caseload of 15 at any given time. Families counted on a home visiting caseload are expected to receive at least three (3) face to face home visits a month.

- ***Development of children from birth through three years***  
Required: evidence that each child is screened annually using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional, (ASQ:SE). This is coupled with the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD, an on-line tool requiring observations of children during center and home-based visits to assess for age appropriate developmental milestones. For children who are not at age-appropriate developmental milestones, timely referrals are made to the local Infant and Toddlers program for children to receive remediation services as appropriate.
- ***Health of children from birth through three years***  
Required: evidence of each child's immunizations, a regular health care provider, and health insurance
- ***Education and employment of parents***  
Required: for those who seek education assistance, evidence of grade level gains or other academic improvement; for those who seek employment assistance, evidence of career exploration and job readiness that results in progress towards that goal
- ***General, prenatal, and reproductive health care objectives, particularly for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults***  
Required: report of additional pregnancies, if any, and of pregnancy outcomes; evidence of a regular health care provider and health insurance
- ***Improved parenting attitudes and behaviors***  
Required: evidence of specific activities, including a formal evidenced-based parenting curriculum with clearly defined goals and objectives that support and encourage participants to become effective, nurturing parents
- ***Empowered families***  
Required: active parent participation in Center governance (e.g. on the advisory board) or evidence of parents' other community involvement activities; parent participation in leadership skill building activities
- ***Interaction with and support from individuals, groups, and agencies within the community***  
Required: evidence of partnerships and collaborations, e.g. written service agreements, MOUs, or shared staff

## **2.4 Collaborative Agreements**

A Family Support Center's ties to other agencies are extensive. Applicants are expected to collaborate with other agencies and groups who will provide services and programming on site or through linkages to ensure that the Family Support Center can deliver services adequately.

Formal agreements, collaborations, and commitments with agencies that provide resources for programming should be included. These agreements should detail scope of work to be performed (i.e. how and to what extent services will be provided), work schedules, remuneration, and other terms and

conditions that structure or define the relationship.

Proposals should provide evidence of linkages or address the absence of linkages with the following:

- Providers of local adult education services, family literacy, and adult education programming;
- Providers of employment readiness services;
- School-based or school-linked programs, such as the Judith P. Hoyer Partnership;
- The local Infants and Toddlers Program. The relationship between the Center and efforts to carry out Public Law 99-457 (the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program) must be described and documented. Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) refers to services designed to meet the developmental needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through two years of age. Part C policies are based on the principles of family-centered and community-based service delivery and require that services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families be provided through a coordinated, interagency system rather than a single agency;
- Home visiting initiatives operating in the geographic area of the proposed Family Support Center; and
- Local Early Childhood Advisory Council.

## **2.5 Community Support and Referral**

Letters of support from groups representing community residents and/or potential participants, schools, health care providers, the Department of Social Services, employability development programs, services for children with special needs, and so forth demonstrate the importance of community support and should be included with the application. These stakeholders should provide letters that describe as specifically as possible the role that the organization played in the development of the proposal and the nature of referral or other arrangements between them and the Family Support Center.

## **2.6 Financial Resources**

The award funded through this Request for Proposals is considered core funding for the program and must be supplemented with financial and in-kind resources. Maryland Family Network is particularly interested in proposals that innovatively weave funding streams into a web of support for young parents with infants and toddlers. Historical information shows that successful Family Support Centers require substantial revenue to support the mission and program of a Center.

Proposals must demonstrate full community support through the provision of financial resources and in-kind services that directly support Center programming. MFN will review the extent to which the proposed applicant has succeeded in garnering cash or in-kind resources, from local, State, Federal or private funding sources for the Center. Please list and describe other sources and amounts of income that will be used to fund the proposed Center (other than the MFN award). Identify specific sources, amounts, term of financial commitments, and allowable uses of matching funds available. Applicants must present their own agency commitments in detail showing direct cash or in-kind support to the proposed Center. Examples of in-kind commitments supporting Center operations include: space and other facility costs, vehicle, staff costs, and delivery of program services through collaborative agreements.

Formal agreements, detailing how and to what extent services or funding will be provided, should be attached to support financial resources listed in this proposal.

## **2.7 Site and Space**

Location is key to the success of a Family Support Center. As all services are voluntary, and because participation numbers and intensity and duration of service are measurements of success, winning applicants will make sure that prospective participants feel comfortable at the chosen site and can easily be transported to and from the site by the Center vehicle, if necessary. Applicants must provide the address of their proposed site, and Maryland Family Network staff will visit it as part of the proposal selection process.

A Family Support Center cannot function effectively in less than 5,000 square feet. The space is required to accommodate at least one child care/development area, a parent lounge/multi-purpose room, classroom(s), kitchen/dining area, offices, private spaces for conversations and interviews, bathrooms, reception/waiting area, storage of confidential materials, outdoor play space, and other areas as needed to support the applicant's program design. A detailed description and a floor plan of the space are required as part of the application.

A minimum of 2000 square feet of contiguous space (usable floor space) should be dedicated to the child development program. Although optional, preference and additional points will be given to those proposals that plan to have a licensed child care space. This may be either the entire child care space or a room within the child care space. Running water, natural light, child size plumbing, refrigeration and telephone service are required in the children's area. A washer and dryer and a defined storage area for coats, diaper bags and strollers should be located in or adjacent to the child development room. It is preferable to have a separate room or alcove for infants. The child care space should be able to accommodate the infant/toddler's need for mobility, security, rest, and social interaction. Infants need to be protected from toddlers in the room through use of dividers, half doors or half walls, to enable safe crawling and a quiet space for rocking and sleeping. Toddlers need a housekeeping area, sand and water tables, a large indoor area for gross motor activities, small cozy corners, and a 16" to 18" table. Easy access to outdoor play space for children of all ages is required.

## **2.8 Staffing**

Applicants should propose staffing arrangements that are appropriate to their plan of services. At a minimum, each Center should have a full-time Center Director, Child Development Specialist, Child Development Assistant, Service Coordinator, and In-Home Interventionist. The selection of individuals to fill these positions is a joint decision by Maryland Family Network and the applicant agency (Child Development Assistant position excluded).

MFN will provide a Family Support Center manual with specifications for job qualifications and responsibilities of staff positions, at the time a contract agreement is offered. Family Support Center staffing patterns vary. Listed below are some of the positions typically found at FSCs:

- Director
- Child development specialist and other child development staff (required ratios are one adult for every three infants; one adult for every four toddlers)
- Home Visitor

- Service coordinator; counselor; social worker; parent educator
- Administrative staff such as receptionist, secretary, and data entry
- Van driver
- Other support staff such as cook and custodian
- Adult education instructors
- Employability instructors
- Volunteers

## **2.9 Hours of Operation**

A Center's hours should reflect the needs of the parents who are served, including those who are in school or working. Evening and weekend hours are encouraged. It is expected that the Center will be open a minimum of 35 hours per week for programming. In order to provide weekend and/or evening programming, facilitate staff planning and training, and perform cleaning and outreach activities, many Family Support Centers are not open for center-based activities on Fridays.

## **2.10 Local Governance**

Many policies that affect operations across the network of Centers are made by Maryland Family Network in consultation with representatives from the Centers, funders, public and private partners, and advisors to Maryland Family Network. Each Center is expected to establish an advisory board comprised of parenting participants, community leaders, and representatives of local public and private organizations and businesses.

Parenting participants are to be involved in planning, fund raising, daily Center activities, and policy development.

It is expected that all Centers and their sponsoring agencies understand that the success of Maryland's Family Support Center initiative has, in large part, been due to the program's warmth and flexibility. To establish effective methods of serving families in communities, the programs have been responsive to changing needs. They have also acknowledged the need for a more egalitarian relationship between staff and parents requiring open communication and mutual respect.

A successful applicant will demonstrate that it can effectively and efficiently administer a project of this size, complexity, and scope, and that it has program experience and knowledge related to prenatal care, infants and toddlers, adolescents, parenting, and family services.

Family Support Centers embody management practices that are family-friendly. Maryland Family Network is interested in the applicant's employment practices, especially those that evidence flexibility and support when it comes to its own staff.

## **2.11 Mandatory Applicant Requirements**

Applicants must meet these minimum requirements:

- Be a public or private nonprofit organization;

- Be able to receive funds from a variety of sources, such as corporate gifts, foundations, United Way, Federal government, and other public funds, and is neither suspended nor debarred from receiving federal awards;
- Have sound business management capacity, including an accounting system that can adequately track grants and related expenses separately;
- Have or secure Workers' Compensation and liability insurance and enforce policies that limit liability exposure;
- Have written personnel policies that conform to the family support philosophy, support regular staff training, and include any required background checks;
- Agree to cooperate with Maryland Family Network in contract and program management, training, technical assistance, monitoring, peer review, and evaluation;
- Have secured and incorporated input from and acceptance by County government, organizations, community groups, and potential participants who reside in the community to be served;
- Have prior program experience that indicates the ability and capacity to operate a Family Support Center; and
- Have established a board or an advisory committee to assist in the development of the proposal and the program (not the board of the sponsoring agency).

## **2.12 Deliverables after Contract Award**

- A detailed implementation plan submitted within one month of the contract award for Maryland Family Network's approval. This plan must include the steps that will be taken to open the Center, the specific time at which each step will occur, and the date the Center will begin serving the community. The selected contractor is expected to have its Center fully operational – space ready and furnished, supplies in place, staff hired, trained, and on the job no later than March 1, 2021.
- Monthly program and statistical reports providing program process data, including participant demographic information and information about families contacted, and frequency and type of services received. This is collected through the use of Maryland Family Network's required Management Information System. Additional narrative summaries may be required to explain implementation progress, any barriers to progress, and any changes in the implementation plan.
- Monthly report of expenditures in a form satisfactory to Maryland Family Network within fifteen days of the last day of the month.
- Quarterly reports required by MSDE of expenditures and summary of events for the time frame. Reports due to MFN within fifteen days of close of the quarter.
- Three copies of an annual financial audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards for financial audits contained in GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS issued by the Comptroller of the United States. The audit, including A-133 if required, is due within nine months of the

Contractor's fiscal year end.

- A cumulative list of all equipment or property acquired from or with funding through Maryland Family Network annually by July 15.

### **2.13 Cost of Project –**

Each proposal should contain two line-item budgets with supporting schedules and narratives: 1) a start-up budget and 2) an operating budget. These two budgets should cover the period of November 9, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Proposals will be rated for their cost effectiveness, based on how comprehensive and effective a program can be delivered at \$330,000 for a full year of operations plus demonstrated ability to leverage additional resources to support the overall budget for the Center.

All budgets should include additional sources of income and in-kind commitments that will be used to support the Center's operations. Credit will be given for budgets that reflect the following in-kind contributions: space and other facility costs, van, staff costs, and delivery of services through collaborative agreements. Other sources of in-kind contributions are expected but may not merit additional credit.

No more than 8% of the total budget may be used for general and administrative costs (overhead).

- ***Budget 1, Center Start-Up (Exhibit B-1)*** Each applicant must submit a budget for Center start-up by line item and with a narrative for a start-up period beginning November 9, 2020. Start-up costs must be liquidated by June 30, 2021. These costs may cover the following if necessary and appropriate: facility renovation costs, child development furnishings, hardware for a four-station computer education laboratory, new 12- to 15 passenger van, computer system for data collection purposes, and office equipment.
- ***Budget 2, Center Core Operations for a Year (Exhibit B-2)*** Each applicant must submit a budget and narrative demonstrating the initiation of Center operations at the close of the start-up period up through June 30, 2021. This budget and narrative should coincide with the applicant's Proposed Approach and Personnel sections presented in the technical section of the proposal. For the renewal year beginning July 1, 2021, the total annual operating budget will be funded at an amount of \$330,000.

## **III. PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

### **3.1 General**

All applicants' proposals received by the closing deadline will be evaluated in a process established by Maryland Family Network. Maryland Family Network or its reviewers may request additional technical assistance from any source.

Proposals will be opened in the presence of two Maryland Family Network employees. The proposals and modifications will be held in a safe place until the established due date. Proposals and modifications will be shown only to Maryland Family Network staff, its selected proposal reviewers, and State or federal employees and agents having a legitimate interest in them.

### **3.2 Mandatory Requirements – Qualifying Proposals**



Maryland Family Network will review each proposal for compliance with the mandatory requirements (II, 2.11). Failure to comply with any mandatory requirements will normally disqualify an applicant's proposal. Maryland Family Network retains the right to waive a mandatory requirement when it is in its best interest to do so. Proposals that meet all mandatory requirements are forwarded to a Review Committee for further evaluation.

**3.3 Review Committee – Technical and Financial Evaluation**

The Review Committee will conduct its evaluation of the technical and financial merits of the proposals and MFN staff will visit proposed sites. The Review Committee’s findings will be considered during the last phase of the evaluation process by the Evaluation Committee and scored in accordance with the evaluation criteria.

**3.4 Evaluation Committee – Proposal Review Criteria**

A panel of experts will be assembled by Maryland Family Network to review all proposals that contain the mandatory requirements. The proposal review process will result in the selection of the proposals with the highest scores. The following criteria will be used to score proposals:

	<u>Maximum Points Available</u>
• Budget/financial resources, use of funds	25
• Management/knowledge of community need	20
• Collaborative agreements & referral systems	15
• Site and space (5 additional points if licensed child care space)	15/20
• Feasibility of work plan for delivery of services, especially core services	15
• Staffing	10
• Ability to be fully operational by February 1, 2021 (5 additional points)	5
<b>Total points</b>	<b>100/110</b>

**IV. INFORMATION REQUIRED IN PROPOSALS**

**4.1 Title Page and Transmittal Letter**

Exhibit C is the Title Page that must be included with each submission.

A brief transmittal letter must be prepared on the applicant's business stationery and signed by an individual authorized to bind the organization to all statements, including services and prices contained in the proposal. Please include the name and contact information for both the project manager and fiscal contact. The letter should clearly state the address of proposed FSC site and the neighborhood in which the Center will be located, the amount of funding requested, and the numbers to be served broken down into the following:

- Parents of children birth through 47 months of age;
- Of those parents, the number of teen and young adult parents 21 years of age or younger, particularly if

began parenting as adolescents

- Children from birth through 47 months of age; and
- Pregnant women and/or expectant parents.

## 4.2 **Technical Section**

### 1. ***Executive Summary***

This section should be clear and concise, a summary of other sections of the proposal. It should include a description of the applicant, a definition of the problem, a statement of what the applicant hopes to accomplish, an outline of the activities and services to be provided, and total project cost. The Executive Summary must not exceed one page.

### 2. ***Project Narrative***

This section includes the following: background/problem statement, proposed approach, experience of the applicant, and staffing. Collaborative partnerships may be described in this section; however collaborative agreements demonstrating partnerships should be submitted as part of the appendices. All pages of the project narrative must use one-inch margins and be numbered according to prescribed numbering in a Table of Contents. Narrative must use line spacing of at least 1.5, and a type size of 12-point font. Charts may use single spacing and a type size of 10-point font, as applicable to proposal. This section must not exceed 20 pages.

- ***Background/Problem Statement***

This section should describe the targeted neighborhood or community to be served by the Center identifying the geographic, physical, economic, social, institutional, and other characteristics of the Center's target area relevant to family support. Describe community strengths and services, problems and/or barriers, what services are needed, connect the need with what you're offering, and affirm community support. Provide a general description of the target population specified in this proposal that clearly demonstrates an understanding to people's needs and barriers to success that they face. Include numbers to be served by the Center; provide statistics and trends for the target population. Be sure to include complete references for all statistics cited (source, title, date).

Communities with a high need for family support are characterized by the following: high ratio of births to adolescent females; high percent of children 0-5 years of age below the poverty level; a low median household income; percentage of households receiving public assistance income; percentage of persons 18-19 not in school and not high school graduates, and percentage of non-English speakers.

If proposing to operate a new Family Support Center in a jurisdiction with an existing FSC or Early Head Start program, please include information about the existing program and demonstrate that there will be no overlap or duplication of services to existing communities within the jurisdiction.

- ***Proposed Approach***

Describe how the proposal was developed. Include a discussion of the input from the local ECAC, prospective participating families, and other community partners.

Describe the core services, how they will be delivered, and any program variation. Identify subcontractors and other collaborators and describe the services they will provide. Provide details of the site and space, including square footage. Provide a work plan with timeline. Detail the personnel expected to be hired. Address the ways that outreach and recruitment will be accomplished. Describe what kinds of and how many participants will receive which services and how often. Describe how fathers and other adult males will be involved in the Center.

Provide an assurance that participants will be able to access community resources whether or not they are congruent with the personal beliefs of either the sponsoring agency or any member of its staff; that the Center will provide or refer participants for health care, family planning, and other services; and that funds will not be used to teach or promote a particular philosophy or belief.

- ***Experience of Applicant***

Describe the applicant's prior program experience, areas of expertise, awards it has received, personnel policies that reflect compatibility with family support principles, fiscal management capability, and relationship to the community. Provide evidence that the applicant is culturally competent with a respect for diversity and otherwise capable of delivering a high quality, highly desired service.

Provide in this section other agreements and evidence related to the mandatory applicant requirements (II. 2.11).

- ***Personnel***

Indicate the type of personnel (qualifications and job functions) to be used in the development and operation of the Center. A job description for each proposed staff position must be included. Please indicate whether staff will be full- or part time. If part time, indicate the number of hours per week. Also indicate whether positions will be in-kind from a collaborating agency, including the applicant's own agency. Any proposed use of subcontractors' staff should be detailed in this section.

### **4.3 Financial Section**

Submit the following:

- Two budgets, using the forms in Exhibits B-1 and B-2, for Center Start-up and Center Core Operations. Each budget should include any additional sources of income and in-kind commitments supporting the Center's operations, especially those for space and other facility costs, initial renovations, van, staffing, and delivery of services through collaborative agreements.
- Supporting budget schedules for contributions (amount, source, and use), personnel, consultant/contract fees, van, equipment, and other categories asterisked on the budget forms.
- Supporting narrative for each budget, related to the Proposed Approach and Personnel as detailed in the technical section of the proposal.
- Other sources and amounts of income (cash and in-kind) used to fund the proposed Family Support Center (other than MFN funding). Identify specific sources, amounts or value, term of financial

commitments, and allowable uses of matching funds available.

- Copies of the last two certified, annual, entity-wide financial audits, including related management letters, and the most recent interim financial statement. Include A-133 Single Audit, for each year, if applicable.
- Specific contractual agreements required by applicant, if any.