



**Solicitation Information  
October 21, 2015**

**LOI #: 7549987**

**TITLE: S.A.F.E. (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) Home Study Services -DCYF**

**Submission Deadline: November 10, 2015 at 10:00 AM (Eastern Time)**

**PRE-BID/ PROPOSAL CONFERENCE: No**

**MANDATORY:**

If YES, any Vendor who intends to submit a bid proposal in response to this solicitation must have its designated representative attend the mandatory Pre-Bid/ Proposal Conference. The representative must register at the Pre-Bid/ Proposal Conference and disclose the identity of the vendor whom he/she represents. A vendor's failure to attend and register at the mandatory Pre-Bid/ Proposal Conference shall result in disqualification of the vendor's bid proposals as non-responsive to the solicitation.

**DATE:**

**LOCATION:**

**SURETY REQUIRED: No**

**BOND REQUIRED: No**

**David J. Francis  
Interdepartmental Project Manager**

Applicants must register on-line at the State Purchasing Website at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov)

**Note to Applicants:**

Offers received without the entire completed three-page RIVIP Generated Bidder Certification Form attached may result in disqualification.

**THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM**

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

The Rhode Island Department of Administration/Division of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families is soliciting proposals from qualified vendors to provide expert S.A.F.E. home study services for the support of foster care licensing in accordance with the terms of this Letter of Interest and the State's General Conditions of Purchase, which may be obtained at the Rhode Island Division of Purchases Home Page by Internet at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov).

The initial contract period will begin approximately November 2015 and end no later than October 31, 2016. The Department need for these vendor services may end prior to October 31, 2016 regarding this Bid Selection. However, contracts may be renewed for up to four (4) additional 12-month periods based on vendor performance and the availability of funds.

This is a Letter of Interest, not an Invitation for Bid. Responses will be evaluated on the basis of the relative merits of the proposal; there will be no public opening and reading of responses received by the Division of Purchases pursuant to this Request, other than to name those offerors who have submitted proposals. There may be more than one successful response, and the award may be made to multiple responsive vendors.

### **INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:**

1. Potential vendors are advised to review all sections of this LOI carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which

depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this LOI will be rejected as being non-responsive.

3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this LOI, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content shall be borne by the vendor. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.
4. Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than 60 days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.
5. All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Proposals misdirected to other state locations, or which are otherwise not present in the Division at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. For the purposes of this requirement, the official time and date shall be that of the time clock in the reception area of the Division.
7. It is intended that an award pursuant to this LOI will be made to a prime vendor, or prime vendors in the various categories, who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint venture and cooperative proposals will not be considered. Subcontracts are permitted, provided that their use is clearly indicated in the vendor's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used is identified in the proposal.

8. All proposals should include the vendor's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from the Division's website at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov).
9. The purchase of services under an award made pursuant to this LOI will be contingent on the availability of funds.
10. Vendors are advised that all materials submitted to the State for consideration in response to this LOI will be considered to be Public Records as defined in Title 38, Chapter 2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request once an award has been made.
11. Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Division of Purchases website on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this LOI.
12. Equal Employment Opportunity (G.L. 1956 § 28-5.1-1, et seq.) – § 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies to all areas where State dollars are spent, in employment, public services, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation.
13. In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation, a corporation without a Rhode Island business address, shall have the right to transact business in the State until it shall

have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). This is a requirement only of the successful vendor(s).

14. The vendor should be aware of the State's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) requirements, which address the State's goal of ten percent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information visit the website [www.mbe.ri.gov](http://www.mbe.ri.gov)

15. Under HIPAA, a "business associate" is a person or entity, other than a member of the workforce of a HIPAA covered entity, who performs functions or activities on behalf of, or provides certain services to, a HIPAA covered entity that involves access by the business associate to HIPAA protected health information. A "business associate" also is a subcontractor that creates, receives, maintains, or transmits HIPAA protected health information on behalf of another business associate. The HIPAA rules generally require that HIPAA covered entities and business associates enter into contracts with their business associates to ensure that the business associates will appropriately safeguard HIPAA protected health information. Therefore, if a Contractor qualifies as a business associate, it will be required to sign a HIPAA business associate agreement

16. In order to perform the contemplated services related to the Rhode Island Health Benefits Exchange (HealthSourceRI), the vendor hereby certifies that it is an "eligible entity," as defined by 45 C.F.R. § 155.110, in order to carry out one or more of the responsibilities of a health insurance exchange. The vendor agrees to indemnify and hold the State of Rhode Island harmless for all expenses that are deemed to be unallowable by the Federal government because it is determined that the vendor is not an "eligible entity," as defined by 45 C.F.R. § 155.110.

## **SECTION 2: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Letter of Interest (LOI) is to solicit proposals in order for the Department of Children, Youth and Families (the Department) to establish contracts through negotiations for the procurement of Home Study Services in support of the Department. The Department seeks to develop a list of vendors qualified to conduct SAFE (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) home studies for applicants for foster licensing. In order to meet the placement needs of children placed by the Rhode Island Family Court in the Department's care, custody and control, and prepare applicants for licensing, vendors are needed to complete the legally required non-relative foster care /adoption home studies for resource families. The initial term of services is expected to be delivered for the period of November 2015 through no later than October 31, 2016.

It is the policy of the Department to provide the child with an out of home placement which is least disruptive to the child and family, includes the placement of siblings together unless the serious specific needs of one or more child justifies separation, offers the child the most familiar and family-like setting possible and encourages and promotes stability and permanency for the child. The Department gives utmost consideration to placing a child in a relative or kinship foster home prior to seeking a non-relative placement. The Department places children who are in need of placement outside of the natural home in licensed foster and adoptive homes or licensed group care facilities. The Department's dual licensure process utilizes the same standards in licensing all kinship and nonrelative prospective foster and adoptive homes.

### **Foster Care**

Foster Care is a protective service provided to families experiencing difficulties so severe that children must be removed from their homes for a period of time. Children are removed to insure their physical and emotional safety. Foster parents are the Department's major resource for children who need to be placed outside the home. It is the role of foster parents to offer a safe and stable home to these children while working with the agency to prepare them for their

reunification with their parents. While children are residing in a foster home, a variety of services are provided to parents and children with the objective of resolving the problems that led to placement.

The Department encourages individuals of varying life styles to apply for a foster home license. The Department considers the prospective foster parent's interest and commitment to child caring and willingness to assist and contribute to the development and growth of children as well as the foster family's acceptance and support of the addition of other children into the family unit. The prospective foster parent must be twenty-one years of age, must provide the Department with the information necessary to verify compliance with required standards, must participate in the foster care licensing study process and must complete foster parent training. Every licensed foster home is reevaluated and re-licensed every two years in order to ensure that the home continues to meet the required standards.

The Department has developed specific procedures for processing foster home applications in an effort to insure that each foster home meets minimum standards of health, safety and care. RI State law (42-72.1) mandates that all foster homes be licensed by the Department. DCYF Foster Care regulations require a Home Study.

The foster care licensing process consists of a series of steps and documentation. The home study vendor is responsible for ensuring that all of the required steps and documents are completed and will submit a packet containing the completed home study and the required assessment and all necessary documents to DCYF for licensing. The vendor shall be responsible for determining the readiness of resource families and their homes to safely and responsibly care for and support the development of children placed in their care.

### **SECTION 3: SCOPE OF WORK**

The purpose of this Letter of Interest (LOI) is to create a list of qualified vendors who are able through their staff/employees to perform SAFE home studies for the purposes of proper licensing for potential Foster families.

The Department anticipates the need to perform a range of home studies per year. There may be as few as thirty (30) home studies per year; however, this number may increase. Successful vendor(s) shall describe the ability to increase capacity should the Department require additional Home Studies. The vendor shall also describe their ability to complete the necessary Home study in a timely fashion. The Department requires all home studies be done within sixty (60) days of the request.

In order to meet the state and federal mandates for home studies, the Department requires the successful vendor(s) be certified, or has employees certified, in the SAFE home study model.

#### **STRUCTURED ANALYSIS FAMILY EVALUATION (SAFE)**

*"SAFE is a structured evaluation process that assists practitioners in identifying and addressing both strengths and areas of concern that may impede current functioning as well as safe and effective parenting. SAFE provides home study practitioners with a structured methodology that supports the social work interview as well as provides a uniform methodology of interpreting and assessing the information gathered during the home study process."*

- **Information Gathering Tools**

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SAFE provides practitioners with uniform information gathering tools that support the home study interview. These tools include; Questionnaire I, Questionnaire II and the SAFE Reference Letter. These tools aid the Home Study Practitioner in doing more targeted interviewing.

The Questionnaires and Reference Letter assist the Home Study Practitioner in identifying strengths, as well as issues to be addressed early in the home study process, thereby eliminating a

great deal of time “guessing and/or fishing” for issues that should be addressed or explored further.

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- **Structured Analysis**

SAFE has identified Psychosocial Factors that research has demonstrated to be necessary for safe and effective parenting - either through adoption, kin or foster care. The **SAFE Desk Guide** and **Psychosocial Inventory** provide an inter-related, supported and structured process to assist Home Study Practitioners in determining the strengths and limitations of a particular Applicant Family.

- **The Home Study Report**

The Home Study Report is uniform in its organization and appearance, but shall be tailored to Rhode Island and the needs of the Department. Each SAFE Home Study looks exactly alike while still meeting the needs of individual regulations, laws, and rules of a jurisdiction or agency. Because of the uniform nature of the Home Study Report, the SAFE home study reader, the Department, shall know exactly where to look for the issues and strengths of the Applicant Family and how those strengths and/or issues might affect either a specific child or child yet to be identified.

- **The Compatibility Inventory**

The SAFE Compatibility Inventory helps support placement workers in determining the appropriateness of fit of an Applicant Family and the child or children in question.

Additionally, the successful vendors awarded this contract will receive referrals for home studies from the DCYF licensing staff. The referrals will include copies of all documents included in the licensing application file: application; clearances; fire inspection reports; personal and physician references if indicated, training materials; and certificates of conformance for lead, and checklist indicating what documentation is missing. The successful vendors will be responsible for reviewing the referral packet and contacting the family to set up a minimum of two in home interviews in accordance with the SAFE Home Study Protocol described within this document. Additional home visits may be required to complete the SAFE home study protocol. All household member must be interviewed as part of the home study protocol. SAFE questionnaires and psycho-social inventory rating forms must be administered and completed as described within this document and in accordance with SAFE protocol. The home study consultant will complete the SAFE Home Study utilizing the SAFE home study templates, materials and guidelines. The successful vendor shall submit a packet which includes the completed SAFE Home Study, signed by the applicants and vendor/consultant who completed the home study, and all required documents for licensing. The successful vendors agree that they will assist resource families in obtaining the appropriate foster care license.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH THE STATE AND FEDERAL LAW, AND THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY AND REGULATIONS**

Successful vendors must be aware of the need for families to comply with any and all state and federal laws, including but not limited to:

- Federal Law (Social Security Act - section 471 (a)(10) and Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 42-72.1 mandate that all foster homes for children must be licensed.
- The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 ([PL 109-248](#)) requires nationwide, including fingerprinting, criminal background checks for prospective foster and adoptive parents and requires child abuse and neglect registry checks for prospective foster and adoptive parents and adult members of their households.

- The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires criminal background checks for all prospective foster and adoptive parents and other adults living in the household regardless of the funding source for the child's placement.
- [RIGL 14-1-34](#) provides that DCYF is prohibited from issuing a license to any individual seeking to be licensed as a foster parent until such time as the results of both the nationwide and statewide criminal record background check, including the nature of any prior criminal record, are forwarded to the Department.
- [RIGL 14-1-34](#) allows the Department to authorize placement in a kinship home pending licensure for a period not to exceed six (6) months, provided that the Department has conducted a DCYF records check pursuant to [RIGL 40-13.2-3.1](#) and a statewide criminal records check (refer to DCYF Policy 900.0025, Kinship Care).

#### **SECTION 4: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL**

Narrative and format: The separate technical proposal should address specifically each of the required elements:

1. **Staff and/or Employee Background and Qualifications** – Proposed vendors shall provide staff resumes/CV and describe education and qualifications of key staff who will be involved in this project, including their experience in the field of preparing SAFE Home Studies. Individuals/employees conducting home studies for the successful vendors shall have at least a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field. Any additional information regarding the Qualifications of the vendor itself may also be included. In addition to being certified in SAFE, as described above, the successful vendor(s) shall have excellent writing and assessment skills; be knowledgeable about the Department's foster care licensing regulations and requirements; and be familiar with the "Trauma Informed Partnerships for Safety and Permanence-Model Approach", hereinafter described as TIPS-MAPP to partnerships in parenting training and the Department's placement and matching process.

- 2. Capability, Capacity, Experience of the proposed vendor** - The successful vendor is required to have substantial professional experience in the child welfare field. The vendor shall indicate their prior experience in completing SAFE Home Studies, the number of Home studies they are able to complete in a certain time frame, and indicate what geographical areas they are able to cover in the State of Rhode Island. Please provide a detailed description of the vendor's experience as an entity with experience doing home studies. A list of relevant client references must be provided, to include client names, addresses, phone numbers, dates of service and type(s) of service(s) provided. The Technical Proposal shall indicate the number of home studies the vendor is able to complete in the next year as well as customary timeline for completing a SAFE Home study. The Technical Proposal shall also include information as to how the vendor plans to conduct home studies and allocate responsibilities? (For example, one person doing all of them, or integrating into the jobs of other people?) Further, how the vendor plans to monitor and ensure that the home studies are being completed in alignment with the Department's regulations, policies, the SAFE model, and state and federal law, and what process will the vendor have in place to adjust/fix services when issues are identified by the Department? Proposed vendors shall also document their experience with the Department's foster care regulations, and TIPS-MAPP (Trauma Informed Parenting for Safety and Permanence Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting). The successful vendor shall express commitment to the confidentiality of the resource families.
- 3. Infrastructure**. The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with postage, client invoices and other related forms and/or correspondence and shall describe their resources and infrastructure in place within their entity to effectively and efficiently carry out the home studies. The vendor shall

describe any client management systems in place to assist with this process. The vendor must have sufficient liability insurance coverage.

4. **Cultural Competency.** Vendor shall describe specifically the vendor's ability to deliver required services in a culturally competent, sensitive and appropriate manner, specifically the vendor's ability to be respectful of diverse cultural issues. Further, vendor shall describe the vendor's access to, and ability to provide for interpreting services.
5. **Fee Attestation.** All applicants must attest to the fully loaded rate of \$50.00 per hour for SAFE Home Study Services in their proposal in order to be considered for this for review. Should an applicant not agree with the rate set forth herein, then they will be dropped from further consideration.

The Department intends to pay an additional ten percent (10%) to the proposed vendor if a Home Study is completed in Forty Five (45) days in a satisfactory manner to the Department.

It is understood that no guarantee is made or implied by the Department. The funding awarded is based upon current and future funding from the Rhode Island legislature or other funding sources for the period of this LOI.

## **SECTION 5: EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

Proposals will be reviewed by a Technical Review Committee comprised of staff from state agencies. The Proposal must receive a minimum of 70 (70%) out of a maximum of 100 technical points to be considered responsive. Any technical proposals scoring less than 70 points will be dropped from further consideration.

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families reserves the exclusive right to select the individual(s) or firm (vendor) that it deems to be in its

best interest to accomplish the project as specified herein; and conversely, reserves the right not to fund any proposal(s).

Proposals will be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Staff and/or Employee Background, Education and Qualifications as related to performing the SAFE home study of resource families as outlined in the scope of work.	25 Points
Capability, Capacity and Experience of the vendor and related staff and/or employees, including experience in Child Welfare and completing SAFE home studies as outlined in the scope of work.	25 Points
Infrastructure, including the vendor’s ability to provide resources and infrastructure to effectively and efficiently complete the home studies.	25 Points
Cultural competency as described in the scope of work, including but not limited to access to interpreting services, in order to most effectively deliver services to meet the diverse needs to the resource families, and the Department.	25 Points
Fee Attestation	<b>Pass/Fail</b>
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	100 Points

Fee attestation, should an applicant not agree with the rate set forth herein, then they will be dropped from further consideration.

Points will be assigned based on the offeror's clear demonstration of his/her abilities to complete the work, apply appropriate methods to complete the work, create innovative solutions and quality of past performance in similar projects.

Applicants may be required to submit additional written information or be asked to make an oral presentation before the technical review committee to clarify statements made in their proposal.

## **SECTION 6: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Information regarding this solicitation will be posted on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information, if any. If technical assistance is required to download, call the Help Desk at (401) 574-9709.

Offerors are encouraged to submit written questions to the Division of Purchases. **No other contact with State parties will be permitted.** Interested offerors may submit proposals to provide the services covered by this Request on or before the date and time listed on the cover page of this solicitation. Responses received after this date and time, as registered by the official time clock in the reception area of the Division of Purchases will not be considered.

Responses (**an original plus four (4) copies**) should be mailed or hand-delivered in a sealed envelope marked "**LOI 7549987 S.A.F.E. (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) Home Study Services -DCYF**" to:

RI Dept. of Administration  
Division of Purchases, 2nd floor  
One Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908-5855

NOTE: Proposals received after the above-referenced due date and time will not be considered. Proposals misdirected to other State locations or those not presented to the Division of Purchases by the scheduled due date and time will be determined to be late and will not be considered. Proposals faxed, or emailed, to the Division of Purchases will not be considered. The official time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.

## **RESPONSE CONTENTS**

Responses shall include the following:

1. One completed and signed three-page R.I.V.I.P generated bidder certification cover sheet (included in the original copy only) downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov).
2. One completed and signed W-9 (included in the original copy only) downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov).
3. **A separate Technical Proposal** describing the qualifications and background of the applicant and experience with and for similar projects, and all information described earlier in this solicitation. The Technical Proposal is limited to six (6) pages (this excludes any appendices). As appropriate, resumes of key staff that will provide services covered by this request.
4. In addition to the multiple hard copies of proposals required, Respondents are requested to provide their proposal in **electronic format (CD-Rom, disc, or flash drive)**. Microsoft Word / Excel OR PDF format is preferable. Only 1 electronic copy is requested and it should be placed in the proposal marked "original".

## **CONCLUDING STATEMENTS**

Notwithstanding the above, the State reserves the right not to award this contract or to award on the basis of cost alone, to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to award in its best interest.

Proposals found to be technically or substantially non-responsive at any point in the evaluation process will be rejected and not considered further.

The State may, at its sole option, elect to require presentation(s) by offerors clearly in consideration for award.

The State's General Conditions of Purchase contain the specific contract terms, stipulations and affirmations to be utilized for the contract awarded to the LOI. The State's General Conditions of Purchases/General Terms and Conditions can be found at the following URL:

<https://www.purchasing.ri.gov/RIVIP/publicdocuments/ATTA.pdf> .