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Commissioner

Request for Qualifications: Certification of Peer Advocates in NYS

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NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM & SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
Addiction Services for Prevention, Treatment, Recovery

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Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
Authorization to Certify Peer Advocates

Introduction

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) is committed to ensuring that all of its services fully recognize and respond to the needs of those in or seeking recovery. SAMSHA defines recovery as process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Through a recovery-oriented system of care, we can provide those long-term supports and services necessary to achieve this goal. For further information OASAS has also developed web resources related to recovery at: <http://www.oasas.ny.gov/recovery/index.cfm>

Purpose

Through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ), OASAS is seeking qualified organizations to become authorized to certify competent and ethical individuals as peer advocates to provide peer services some of which may be eligible for Medicaid Reimbursement in accordance with relevant OASAS laws and regulations; and, the OASAS Clinical and Billing Guidance manual regarding Ambulatory Patient Group (APG) Service Category: Peer Support Services. Regulations relevant to outpatient clinics can be found at: <http://www.oasas.ny.gov/regs/documents/822.pdf>. The APG guidance manual can be found at: <http://www.oasas.ny.gov/admin/hcf/APG/Index.cfm>. OASAS believes that the addition of these services will result in better client/patient outcomes, reduced recidivism rates and lower overall treatment costs, in a lifetime, for individuals who receive them.

THIS SOLICITATION WILL NOT RESULT IN A CONTRACT WITH THE NYS OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES.

OASAS will use the objective criteria specified herein to develop a list of organizations authorized to certify peer advocates. This is not a competitive procurement. All organizations that submit an acceptable application will be placed on a list of authorized organizations.

Definition

For purposes of this RFQ, a Peer Advocate, as defined by OASAS Regulations, is an individual who holds a credential from a certifying authority recognized by the Commissioner. Peer advocates are supervised by a credentialed or licensed clinical staff member to provide outreach and peer support services based on clinical need as identified in the patient's treatment/recovery plan which occur on the premises of a certified program. The Part 822 definition and peer support services Medicaid billing category is in no



way meant to limit the provision of other types or forms of peer support that may be provided in other settings.

Note: While OASAS is likely to receive responses to this RFQ from organizations that already provide certifications in other states, OASAS is interested in preserving its ability to consider offering other certifications and credentials in NYS and, thus, we are requiring that any organization that is deemed a certifying authority by OASAS agree, in writing, to not offer any other certification(s) in NYS, or seek International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) approval to offer other certifications in NYS, without the express consent of OASAS.

1) *Responder Qualifications and Expertise (Cover Pages)*

Qualifications:

Responder must provide a cover page or pages detailing the following:

- Full name and address of organization
- Year organization was founded and an outline of the organization's history including its experience providing certification for SUD prevention, treatment and recovery staff.
- Evidence that the organization has a working knowledge of federal, state and local guidelines related to Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) and the implementation of peers into the existing SUD continuum of services in New York State.
- Total number of employees
- Location(s) from which all services will be performed
- Describe the nature of your organization (e.g. municipal corporation, business corporation, not-for-profit corporation, proprietorship, etc.)
- A statement as to indebtedness
- A list of all outstanding liens, if any, against the Responder
- A summary of litigation, if any, against the Responder and the outcome or its disposition of such litigation.
- A statement as to whether Responder has ever been deemed a non-responsible vendor by any governmental or entity.

Expertise:

Responder must demonstrate that they have the necessary expertise to provide the required services. Describe in detail the relevant expertise in providing the services required, including a description of the services provided and the number of years providing the service.

Describe other projects involving similar services. Outline your experience and duration in the provision of such similar services, including the client population served and the length of time providing such services.



Responder should provide a list of all contracts within the last five years (regardless of the type of service) setting forth the time period for those services and indicate whether any contracts were terminated early and if so the party initiating the termination and reasons for early termination .

2) Staffing - Qualifications and Experience of Personnel

Responders must provide:

- Resumes of the project director and other key staff including information technology staff and contractors who will be assigned to this service. Describe the qualification and background of your staff and contractors, insofar as they relate to this service (e.g., education, experience). Key staff and contractors performing this service must have a reasonable amount of experience developing and issuing certifications for addiction professionals.
- Job descriptions of each key staff person and contractor; and, include the volume of initial applications and renewal applications estimated for each staff person performing reviews.

3) Certification Application, Testing and Review Process

Responder should provide their requirements for developing and disseminating certification standards and a psychometrically sound examination.

- Include the role delineation study and/or job task analysis or a plan to develop one that the certification requirements and examinations are based on.
- If a plan to develop a role delineation study and/or job task analysis is included please include that cost in the Budget component of the RFQ.
- Include the criteria for applicants to be qualified to take the examination and the process in which applicants will be notified of testing dates and sites.
- Include the process in which testing dates and sites will be scheduled and the dates and specific sites in NYS that will be used to administer the examination.

Requirements for Certification and Ethical Standards

Responder must describe a process for certification of individuals including, but not limited to:

- Establishing Applicant eligibility requirements, including minimum age, education.



- Establishing ethical standards that all certified individuals will be required to observe.
- Establishing criteria for Pre-screening of Applicants who may not be appropriate for certification.
- Mechanism for notification to individuals seeking certification that issuance of the certification does not preclude any subsequent background check and/or criminal history review, that may be required as a condition of employment; and that the information obtained could possibly result in the loss of the certification if that information is determined to have a negative impact on public safety.
- All certification requirements should meet the minimum standards set forth by the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) these standards can be found at:
<http://internationalcredentialing.org/news?mode=PostView&bmi=1126729>
- Minimum training requirements should also include, but not be limited to: which training curriculum will be used and any additional training, experience, supervision or recommendations necessary to become certified. Please also include a rationale as to how requirements would compare to other states and national standards that currently exist or are being proposed and how that may affect future reciprocity with other state and national peer standards.
- The application review, to include, but not limited to, verification of documentation submitted to meet eligibility requirements and minimum training, experience, supervision or recommendation requirements.
- Application processing timeframes not to exceed 6 weeks for a comprehensive review of the application, including request of any additional information needed to make an approval for certification or a determination of deficiencies.
- Criteria and procedures for applications that may be denied.
- Renewal of certification including, but not limited to, notification; minimum training requirements and verification of documentation submitted to meet eligibility requirements.
- Reinstatement of lapsed certification.
- Revocation, suspension (or other penalties) of certification.



4) *Complaint Investigation Process*

Complaints

Responder must:

- Disclose to OASAS the process for informing clients/the public/peer advocates of the complaint process.
- Detail the way persons are to file complaints.
- Detail how certified peers will receive notice of complaint.
- Detail the nature of the complaints they will review.
- Outline the types of sanctions it will issue.

Investigations

Responder must:

- Detail the qualifications and training of the investigators that will be performing investigations of complaints against peer advocates.
- Detail what possible outcomes may occur after an investigation.

Administrative Process/Hearings

Responder must detail the process they will use to impose a penalty on a certified peer including whether a hearing or other administrative process will be used. Responder should also explain the types of penalties for alleged violations and how they will adjudicate fairly and consistently.

5) *Conflicts of Interest*

Responder must disclose to OASAS the existence of any conflicts of interests, whether existing or potential. If none exists, please state so.

Responder must disclose:

- Procedures of how they will handle anyone who has a financial, personal or official interest in or conflict (appearance of a conflict) with any matter



pending before the certifying organization of such nature that it prevents, or may prevent, that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner.

- Any material financial relationships that the responder or any employee of the responder has that may create a conflict of interest in acting as the certifying organization
- Any family relationship that the responder or any employee of the responder has that may create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest with the certifying organization.

6) Computerized Tracking and Reporting

Organizations deemed to be qualified to provide certification of Peer Advocates will need to maintain an accurate and current database of all certified Peer Advocates.

Please provide a description of how your organization will accomplish the following tasks:

- Develop a database of certified Peer Advocates.
- Allow stakeholders including, but not limited to, employers; public/ private insurance payers; and OASAS, to access information regarding the current status of a certified Peer Advocate (active, suspended, revoked, etc.), including original date of certification; and effective and expiration dates.
- Provide information as to the quantity and demographics of certified Peer Advocates to local, state and national stakeholders.
- Provide timely notification to Peer Advocates of the certification process for both initial certification and renewal of certification.
- If utilizing an electronic application system, Responder must :
 - Provide a description of the system and associated software program(s) to be used;
 - Identify how the system will be implemented;
 - Provide information regarding how technical assistance will be provided to applicants who will be using the system;
 - Provide information regarding how technical assistance will be provided to applicants who do not have access and/or expertise in using technology



7) *Fiscal Viability Plan and Budget*

OASAS will not provide revenue to authorized certifying authorities. To insure that organizations that are deemed “authorized” are both viable and sustainable; and, have given sufficient forethought and deliberation to the costs associated with the proposal, responders must demonstrate they are fiscally sound. Therefore, responders must identify revenue sources and demonstrate sustainability for a minimum of five years.

Responder must:

- Provide a budget that includes, but is not limited to, identifying the amount of initial investment and resources to be used to initiate the process of certification **prior to** the collection of fees and/or other revenue associated with certification or training and how that initial investment will fund initial marketing and outreach to notify and obtain applications from the target audience.
- Identify all fees that will be collected, including, but not limited to:
 - Initial application fees not to exceed \$100.00
 - Recertification fees not to exceed \$100.00 every three years
 - Late fees, if applicable not to exceed \$25.00 for every 6 months of the lapsed certification period
 - Training related to certification not to exceed \$20.00 per curriculum hour.
 - Examination Development/ Administration – not to exceed – \$75.00 – Initial testing and any re-testing fee
 - Any other fees to be charged to potential applicants
 - Any other fiscal resources that will be used to offset the costs of the certification functions outlined in your application.
- Provide a projection of the total revenue which will be collected through the fees and resources outlined above, for each year of the five year period, and illustrate the methods used to arrive at that total.
- Account for costs related to services listed in the proposal including, but not limited to, (developing a role delineation study/job task analysis if applicable, staffing, space, equipment, software, utilities, contracts, supplies, background checks, complaint investigations, hearings, etc...).



- List all in-kind services if costs will not be covered by fees collected, and provide a rationale as to why it is in the organizations best interest to provide in-kind services for this purpose.
- Outline a sustainability plan for a minimum of five years to continue to provide this service.

8) *Timeline for Implementation*

All certifying authorities responding to this proposal must have capability to be operational within six months of approval. Responders must provide an implementation timeline to include, but not be limited to:

- Notification of target audience to be certified.
- Preparation of materials and testing processes.
- Dissemination of materials.
- Dates each of the following services will begin:
 - Application reviews
 - Related training (if applicable)
 - Testing

9) *RFQ Evaluation Criteria*

The responses to this Request for Qualification will be reviewed by a team of OASAS staff. The review team will review the response to determine whether or not the applicant has supplied sufficient information such that each area outlined below and has a complete response.

1. Responder qualifications are complete, accurate and satisfactory.
2. Responder has provided details of its experience which establish sufficient expertise.
3. Resumes of project director and key staff are included.
4. Background of project director and key staff meets prescribed qualifications.
5. Job descriptions of key staff and contractors meet prescribed qualifications.
6. Estimated volumes of initial and renewal applications are included and the numbers of applications and staff identified to review them are reasonable.
7. Role Delineation Study and/or Job Task Analysis are included; if not included a plan to develop such and the cost of same are included.
8. Certification application eligibility requirements are included and sufficiently address the content areas outlined in Section 3 of this RFQ.
9. Ethical standards are included and sufficiently address the areas outlined in Section 3 of the RFQ.
10. Pre-screening criteria is included and adequately addresses the areas outlined in Section 3 of this RFQ.



11. Mechanism for notification of criminal history/background check upon employment is included and sufficiently addresses the areas outlined in Section 3 of this RFQ.
12. A comparison of proposed education, experience, supervision and recommendation requirements to other state and national peer certification standards is included and the potential impact on reciprocity related to that comparison is included.
13. Application review process meets RFQ standards identified in Section 3 of this RFQ.
14. Processing timeframe meets RFQ standard identified in Section 3 of this RFQ.
15. Criteria and procedures for certification application denial included and reasonable.
16. Processes for certification renewals, reinstatement, and penalties are comprehensive and reasonable.
17. Complaint process is included, comprehensive and reasonable.
18. Staff assigned to conduct investigations is qualified and competent
19. Administrative/Hearing process and penalties are included, fair and reasonable.
20. Conflicts of interest plan that is adequate and meets the standards identified in Section 5 of this RFQ is included.
21. Computerized tracking and reporting that meets the standards identified in Section 6 of this RFQ is included.
22. Fiscal viability plan that contains a sustainability plan is included and sufficient to demonstrate sustainability for 5 years.
23. A comprehensive budget including all the standards identified in Section 7 of this RFQ is included and reasonable.
24. A timeline for implementation is included, meets the standards identified in section 8 of this RFP and sufficiently demonstrates applicants can be operational within 6 months of approval.

10) Administrative Requirements

Formatting Requirements

- Font should be 12 pt. Times New Roman
- Line spacing-Single spaced
- All pages submitted should have 1 inch margins (top, bottom, left and right).
- Pages should be numbered consecutively from beginning to end
- Application should be submitted unbound

Submission Requirements

The original application and three copies, consisting of:

1. Cover Page(s) detailing the information in section 1 of this RFQ
2. Application Narrative which includes responses to sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this RFQ. Application Narratives should be no longer than 20 pages.
3. Fiscal Viability Plan and Budget. (Should be no more than 5 pages)
4. Implementation Timeline (Should be no more than 2 pages)



The original and three copies of the completed application should be delivered to the individual below in an envelope marked:

“Certification of Peer Advocates in NYS Proposal”

Julia M. Fesko, Director
Talent Management Bureau
NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203

Questions regarding this RFQ

Any questions or requests for clarification about this RFQ must be submitted in writing via e-mail or US Mail must be directed to:

Julia M. Fesko, Director
Talent Management Bureau
NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203
(518) 485-2027
juliafesko@oasas.ny.gov

All inquiries must be typed and include your name, organization, mailing address, phone number and email address. Please reference the **Certification of Peer Advocates in NYS RFQ** in your request. To the degree possible, each inquiry should cite the RFQ section to which it refers. With the exception of formatting or other procedural questions, OASAS will not entertain inquiries via telephone. Inquiries may be submitted only by email or US mail. Inquiries will be answered on an individual basis within 1 week of receipt. Answers will be provided by return email unless the requestor specifically requests a response by US mail, in which case such response will be sent by first class mail only. A list of all questions and answers asked to date will be maintained by OASAS and will be provided within 1 week to anyone who makes a request by email or US mail.

11) Notification of Authorization

OASAS will evaluate every application submitted in response to this RFQ until such time as OASAS withdraws or suspends application submission. OASAS will notify potential applicants in writing within approximately 6 weeks of receipt of a completed application as to whether or not their application is sufficient to warrant designation as an organization authorized to certify peer advocates. All organizations that submit an acceptable application will be placed on a list of authorized organizations. Once designated, OASAS will work with organizations to coordinate implementation in accordance with the requirements of this RFQ.



12) *Reserved Rights*

OASAS reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all applications received in response to this RFQ;
- Withdraw the RFQ or suspend acceptance of application submissions at any time, at the agency's sole discretion upon 30 days notice to the general public, such notice to be given by publication on the OASAS website;
- Authorize applicants based on geographical or regional consideration to best serve the interests of the state;
- Seek clarifications and revisions of applications;
- Amend the RFQ to correct errors of oversights, or to supply additional information as it becomes available;
- Waive any requirement that is not material;
- Utilize any and all ideas submitted in the applications received;
- Require correction of simple arithmetic or other apparent errors for the purpose of assuring a full and complete understanding of an applicant's proposal and/or to determine an applicant's compliance with the requirements of the RFQ; and
- Revoke or suspend, in the sole discretion of OASAS, an authorization issued to an applicant upon discovering the applicant provided a material misrepresentation in the application or upon a showing that the applicant is unable to fulfill the requirements and obligations required by this RFQ.

