

TEXAS

Foster Youth Health

INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

August 2021





Texas Foster Youth Health Initiative

Request for Proposals

The Texas Foster Youth Health Initiative (TFYHI) builds relationships across child welfare and adolescent health systems to promote optimal health and prevent dating abuse, unwanted teen pregnancies, and STIs among child welfare-involved youth. The Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) at the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work is partnering with the [Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy](#), the [Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services](#) (Texas Center for Child and Family Studies), [Healthy Futures of Texas](#), and the [North Texas Alliance to Reduce Unintended Pregnancy in Teens](#) (Ntarupt) to develop and test innovative interventions for youth in care, foster caregivers, child welfare professionals, and child-placing organizations. TFYHI interventions focus on helping youth in foster care feel connected, safe, and empowered and access the information needed to make decisions about their sexual health and relationships.

Through this **Request for Proposals (RFP)**, TFYHI is seeking to partner with residential care operations and child-placing agencies serving children in the Department of Family and Protective Services areas of Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley to pilot and test interventions for youth, foster caregivers, and staff. Interventions are trauma-informed and inclusive, build skills for communication and healthy relationships, increase knowledge about sexual development and sexual and reproductive health, and provide resources and ongoing technical assistance.

Selected agencies will participate in an organizational needs assessment, receive training for foster caregivers and staff, coordinate sexuality and relationship education programs for youth, and review organizational policies to support and sustain sexuality and relationship education.

The RFP, selection of applicants, and subcontracts are coordinated and administered by the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies. Four agencies will be selected to receive a subcontract beginning October 1, 2021 (respectively October 31, 2021) and ending June 30, 2022. The award ceiling is \$50,000 with the final amount depending on the scope of proposed work.

Who Are We?

The Texas Foster Youth Health Initiative (TFYHI) comprises partners working in child welfare and adolescent health systems who are committed to improving health outcomes for youth in foster care. The Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) at UT Austin, the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies are partners with statewide focus that have expertise in advocacy, training, research, evaluation, and collaboration. Healthy Futures of Texas in Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio, the North Texas Alliance to Reduce Unintended Pregnancy in Teens (Ntarupt) in Dallas, and the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy in Houston focus on providing culturally sensitive sexual health education in their respective communities.

This initiative is funded through a \$5.4 million three-year grant (July 2020 – June 2023), awarded by the [Office of Population Affairs](#) at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The focus of this grant program is on bringing together a multidisciplinary network of partners and developing innovative strategies to make a lasting and measurable impact on optimal health outcomes for youth.

Background

TFYHI conducted an extensive environmental scan composed of ongoing research with youth in foster care and their caregivers, a literature review, conversations among TFYHI partners, and interviews with stakeholders including Texas Department of Family and Protective Services regional directors, child welfare judges, child-placing agencies, and health care providers. Based on our environmental scan, we confirmed a clear need to address the disproportionately high rates of teen pregnancy, STIs, sexual and dating violence, and sexual exploitation among youth involved with the child welfare system.

Throughout our meetings with leaders in the child welfare system, we identified the need for ongoing support and conversations with youth about their sexuality and relationships. We also identified a need for LGBTQIA+ inclusive resources as these youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system and need resources to develop a positive sense of self and take care of their sexual health.

To date, efforts to address this problem have been fragmented and have not yielded sustainable and impactful solutions. We intend to develop multi-layered interventions that together strengthen adult-youth relationships, provide multiple touchpoints for youth to learn about sexual health and healthy relationships, and create systems that are responsive to the needs of youth with extensive trauma histories.

Brief Description of Texas Foster Youth Health Initiative Interventions:

- Power Through Choices (PTC) is a sexuality education curriculum designed specifically for youth in out-of-home care from the Healthy Teen Network (Healthy Teen Network, 2019). PTC comprises ten 90-minute lessons designed to be delivered to groups of 13- to 18-year-olds (Healthy Teen Network, 2019). PTC focuses on unique considerations that may lead to increased risk for youth in care, including lack of support systems, experiences of trauma and abuse, and limited self-support skills. Topics include assertiveness and communication, healthy relationships and consent, reproductive anatomy and health, STI prevention and contraception, self-care, and decision-making. TFYHI partners are currently working to update the curriculum.
- Brave Conversations (originally developed by Dr. Monica Faulkner) is a three- to five-hour training that includes skill-building workshops and tools for foster caregivers and mentors. The training helps adults understand their own values around sexuality and how those values impact their comfort in talking to youth. Training activities focus on building skills for engaging youth in ongoing, supportive, age-appropriate, and authentic conversations about sexuality, relationships, and health. The materials have been developed to be trauma-informed. TFYHI partners are working with foster caregivers to expand and test the training through this initiative. Additional resources and ongoing support will be available through an online learning community hosted on the TFYHI website.
- *An Introduction to Sexuality Education: A Handbook for Child Welfare Providers*, published by UNHUSHED (April 2021) and authored by Karen Rayne, Amber Borczyk, and Monica Faulkner, provides content on trauma-informed approaches to sexuality education; sexuality and child development; and handouts and tools for use with children and youth. The information in this handbook is the foundation of a six-hour, one-day training meant to provide child-placing agency staff and other child welfare professionals with knowledge and ideas to incorporate sexuality education in their practice. The training will be followed by four weekly one-hour technical assistance meetings.
- Visit the [TFYHI website](#) for more information.

Project Objectives/Funding Opportunity

- Facilitate access to trauma-informed, age-appropriate, and inclusive sexuality and relationship education for youth, staff, and foster caregivers;
- Improve access to sexual reproductive healthcare for youth in foster care, including increasing awareness of the reproductive rights of youth in foster care and offering healthcare providers a better understanding of confidentiality, consent, and access;
- Increase collaboration with community agencies on sexual health education, health care, and violence prevention; and
- Review organizational policies to support and sustain sexuality and relationship education.

Child-placing agencies and residential care operations will be subcontracted through the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies.

Minimum Qualifications

1. Must be a licensed child-placing agency or residential care operation serving Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, or the Rio Grande Valley area(s).
2. Must attach a budget outlining how the funding of up to \$50,000 will be spent.
3. Must be in good standing with all state agencies.
4. Must have a current version of video conferencing capability that is compatible with TXICFW or include the cost of purchasing and maintaining it through the duration of the project in the budget. This includes computer-based cameras, headsets, and a Zoom virtual meeting account, which can be established at a low cost at www.zoom.us.
5. Must be willing to engage in ongoing, collaborative inquiry, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement activities. Potential data to be collected is outlined below. TXICFW will ensure that all necessary permissions for testing and evaluating interventions are obtained from the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin. Data will be collected and monitored on an ongoing basis and will be used to fine-tune both the interventions and the implementation strategies as the project progresses.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

Deliverables	Timeline
Participate in an organizational needs assessment that includes a series of meetings (individually or in group) with agency administrators, program managers, and frontline staff	November – December 2021
Review organizational protocol & policy relevant for educating youth, staff, and foster caregivers on sexual/reproductive health and healthy relationships and develop recommendations	January – March 2022
Coordinate <u>staff</u> participation in <i>UNHUSHED</i> training: New & existing staff (full day of training plus four 1-hour technical assistance sessions)	to be scheduled November 2021 – June 2022
Coordinate <u>foster caregiver</u> participation in <i>Brave Conversations</i> training: New & existing foster caregivers (4-5 hours of training)	to be scheduled November 2021 – June 2022
Coordinate <u>youth</u> (ages 14-21) participation in sexuality and relationship education: <i>Power Through Choices</i> (10 lessons)	to be scheduled January – June 2022
Provide information for youth, caregivers, and staff on how to access sexual/reproductive healthcare	January – June 2022
Participate in evaluation	Training feedback, pre- and post-tests from staff & caregivers Youth feedback, pre- and post-tests

Components of the Proposal

Proposals must be submitted online here: https://bit.ly/TFYHI_RFP on or before 5:00 PM Central Time on October 15th, 2021. Each of the following sections must be completed and are described in more detail within the online form.

1. Agency Description – 250 words or less
2. Project Narrative – 1,000 words or less
3. Budget
4. Other Required Information
 - Upload a copy of audited, reviewed, or complied financial statements for the most recent year issued
 - Upload a copy of the organization’s current policy and procedures for background checks
 - Upload a copy of your agency’s organization chart.
 - Upload a budget and budget narrative

Proposal Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated by a selection panel using a rubric scoring worksheet. Decisions will be based on an organization’s ability to meet the Minimum Requirements as outlined in the RFP and how well the applicant completes all components of the application. Preference will be given to organizations

who can demonstrate how TFYHI interventions focused on helping youth in foster care feel connected, safe, and empowered to make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships relate to the overall mission of the organization.

Timeline

- Proposals must be submitted on or before 5:00 PM Central Time on October 15th, 2021 online using this link: https://bit.ly/TFYHI_RFP
- Select agencies in October
- Finalize scope of work with selected agencies by October 31st, 2021
- Implement and test interventions (as detailed in scope of work above) from November 1st, 2021 through June 30th, 2022

RFP Submission and Contact

Please submit all questions and inquiries to Andrea Requenes: arequenes@tacfs.org.