

TEXAS

Foster Youth Health

INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

August 2022





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 at the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work is partnering with the [Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services](#) (Texas Center for Child and Family Studies), and [Healthy Futures of Texas](#) 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 organizations that serve youth in care with the Department of Family and Protective Services. We are focusing on the areas of Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley to pilot interventions for youth, foster caregivers, child welfare professionals, and/or other adults that serve these youth. 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 organizations will participate in an organizational needs assessment, review organizational policies to support and sustain sexuality and relationship education, receive training for staff and other adults serving youth in care, and coordinate educational programs for youth. All trainings and programs for youth will be facilitated by TFYHI team members.

The RFP, selection of applicants, and subcontracts are coordinated and administered by the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies. Organizations will be selected to receive a subcontract beginning by October 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023. The award ceiling is \$40,000 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 who are committed to improving health outcomes for youth in foster care. The Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing at UT Austin and the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies are partners with expertise in advocacy, training, research, evaluation, and collaboration. Healthy Futures of Texas with offices in the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston focuses on providing culturally sensitive sexual health education and advocacy in the 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, 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:

The following interventions will be facilitated by members of the TFYHI team. Organizations applying for the RFP need to be prepared to help coordinate the trainings by recruiting participants, coordinating dates, securing a location for the training, and working with TFYHI to ensure that the interventions can be implemented.

- *THRIVE* is a sexuality education curriculum developed by TFYHI specifically for youth in out-of-home care, ages 14 - 19. *THRIVE* is designed to be implemented in small groups of between 5 and 15 participants. The 10-hour curriculum can be provided in 5, 2-hour sessions or 2, 5-hour workshops. *THRIVE* provides inclusive and trauma-informed education on relationships and sexuality and focuses on three areas of youth development: (1) development of a positive sense of self, (2) skills for safe and supportive relationships, and (3) empowerment through medically accurate information and resources. The goal is for youth to feel connected, safe, and empowered so they can make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships. *THRIVE* is centered on the lived experience of youth in care and recognizes the importance of relationship building, communication about boundaries and consent, and information and choice in navigating sexual and reproductive health needs.
- *Brave Conversations* (originally developed by Dr. Monica Faulkner) is a 4-hour training that includes skill-building workshops and tools for foster caregivers, mentors, advocates and other supportive adults. The training can be delivered in-person or virtually and training formats can be customized. 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. 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 Borcyk, 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 two, 2-hour technical assistance meetings.
- Visit the [TFYHI website](#) for more information.

Project Objectives

- Participate in an organizational needs assessment.
- Review organizational policies to support and sustain sexuality and relationship education.
- Facilitate access to trauma-informed, age-appropriate, and inclusive sexuality and relationship education for youth, staff, foster caregivers and/or other adults serving these youth;
- 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

Minimum Qualifications

1. Must serve foster youth in Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, or the Rio Grande Valley area(s).
2. Must attach a budget detailing how the funding of up to \$40,000 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
<p>Designate a staff who will coordinate all project activities.</p> <p>Participate in an organizational needs assessment that includes a series of meetings (individually or in group) with agency administrators, program managers, and frontline staff</p>	<p>October – December 2022</p>
<p>Review organizational protocol & policy relevant for educating youth, staff, and foster caregivers on sexual/reproductive health and healthy relationships and develop recommendations for revisions</p>	<p>January – March 2022</p>
<p>Coordinate <u>staff</u> participation in UNHUSHED training: New & existing staff (full day of training plus four total hours of technical assistance sessions)</p>	<p>to be scheduled between October 2022 – April 2023</p>
<p>Coordinate two different cohorts of <u>foster caregivers or other supportive adults</u> for participation in Brave Conversations training (4 hours); minimum of five participants per cohort</p>	<p>to be scheduled October 2022 – March 2023</p>
<p>Coordinate two cohorts of <u>youth</u> (ages 14-21) for participation in THRIVE (10 hours); minimum of five participants per cohort with no more than two year age difference between participants</p>	<p>to be scheduled October 2022 – March 2023</p>
<p>Provide information for youth, caregivers, and staff on how to access sexual/reproductive healthcare</p>	<p>January – June 2023</p>
<p>Participate in evaluation</p>	<p>Training feedback, pre-and post-tests from staff & caregivers</p> <p>Youth feedback, pre-and post-tests</p>

Components of the Proposal

Proposals must be submitted online here: <https://tacfs.wufoo.com/forms/q34fyd1e9ga98/> on or before 5:00 PM Central Time on August 31, 2022. Each of the following sections must be completed and are described in more detail within the online form.

1. Organization Description – 250 words or less – Describe the size of your organization (e.g. number of staff, volunteers, mentors, foster caregiver, youth).
2. Project Narrative – 1,000 words or less – Describe how you will implement the project objectives; identify who will coordinate project activities and link with the TFYHI team.
3. Budget – Include detailed information on cost for staffing the project and on incentives you will provide to those attending the trainings (e.g. cost of snacks, meals you intend to provide, assistance with transportation and/or childcare, gift cards, etc)
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 August 31st, 2022 online using this link: <https://tacfs.wufoo.com/forms/q34fyd1e9ga98/>
- Agencies will be selected in September
- Finalize scope of work and contract with selected agencies by September 30th, 2022
- Implement project objectives (as detailed in scope of work above) from October 1st, 2022 through June 30th, 2023

RFP Submission and Contact

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