TO: Eligible Applicants

FROM: Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: February 17, 2012

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): Educational Surrogate Parents Program

General Information

Purpose of RFP: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) seeks grant proposals from qualified entities for the continued recruitment and training operation of the Educational Surrogate Parent Program. The program is designed to provide assistance to special education students, ages 3 through 21, who are wards of the state; are unaccompanied homeless youth; or whose parent(s), as defined under 34 CFR 300.30, cannot be identified or located.

Eligible Applicants: Not-for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, school districts, special education cooperatives, regional offices of education, intermediate service centers, and other entities experienced in providing state-wide training and volunteer recruitment are eligible to apply.

Grant Period: The initial grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2012, and will extend from the execution date of the grant agreement until June 30, 2013. The successful applicant may reapply via continuing application for up to four additional years (i.e. through June 30, 2017), with subsequent grant periods extending from July 1 of each year through June 30 of the following year. Funding in the subsequent years will be contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period.

Grant Award: One grant will be awarded for fiscal year (FY) 2013 (year one of the project) in an amount not to exceed $115,000. For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of P.L. 101-166 (the Stevens Amendment), bidders are advised that 100 percent of funds for this project are derived from federal sources.

The grant award amounts in each of years 2 through 5 (i.e., FY 2014 through 2017) will not exceed $115,000 per year. Annual allocations will depend on program needs and scope of activities in each year as well as total appropriation for the program.

Application Deadline: Mail the original and five copies (six applications in all) to the Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, N-253, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001, Attn: Juana Burchell, Special Education Services, to ensure receipt no later than March 16, 2012. No electronic submissions including facsimiles will be accepted. The original and five copies must be received by the due date in order for the proposal to be considered. Late or substantively incomplete proposals will not be eligible for consideration.
Proposals also may be hand-delivered to the following locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Springfield Office</th>
<th>Chicago Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Center</td>
<td>Reception Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>Suite 14-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 North First Street</td>
<td>100 West Randolph Street</td>
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Contact Person: For more information on this RFP, contact Juana Burchell at 217/782-5589 or jburchel@isbe.net.

Background

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires assurances, from states receiving federal funds for the provision of special education, that educational surrogate parents will be appointed for pupils with disabilities who are without parental representation in special education procedures. Additionally, Section 300.519 of the Code of Federal Regulations [34 CFR 300.519] provides further information about surrogate parents. This information may be accessed at http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=ad1be17d4f6fb7912f9c63c2909a148c&rgn=div5&view=text&node=34:2.1.1.1.1&idno=34#34:2.1.1.1.5.60.20.

The Illinois State Board of Education created the Educational Surrogate Parents Program with the purpose of developing a statewide system responsible for the recruitment and training of volunteers willing to embrace this role and represent eligible students in the planning of their education. The program has two parts. One is the recruitment and training of individuals to ensure an adequate pool of educational surrogate parents are available across the state to meet students’ representation needs. The second is the assignment of the educational surrogate parents which is completed by agency staff. Agency staff work closely and are in constant contact with the entity which conducts the recruitment and training.

Recruitment efforts are extremely important as there are some areas of the state that have very low numbers of educational surrogate parents. Additionally, volunteers who wish to become an educational surrogate parent must complete a six (6) hour training and pass a test. This training includes such areas as special education procedures, advocacy skills, and communication skills which afford the volunteers the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise the expected duties as the students’ advocates.

During FY 2011, the Educational Surrogate Parents Program provided services to 1,449 students in need of an Educational Surrogate Parent. The total number of requests for either the assignment or withdrawal of an Educational Surrogate Parent during FY 2011 was 2,298. The recruitment efforts included community outreach, mailings to private facilities, communication with existing educational surrogate parents, and other related activities. Twenty-four (24) trainings were conducted across the state to keep up with the maintenance of an adequate pool of volunteers. Currently, a total of 909 volunteers are available to serve in this capacity.

For more information about educational surrogate parents, you may visit http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/surrogate_parent.htm.

Program Specifications

The Educational Surrogate Parents Program focuses on the recruitment and training of volunteers across Illinois. The intent is to build a system that supports student representation in the development of special education Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
Project Deliverables:

1. Establish and maintain a statewide recruitment and training cadre to serve across the state;
2. Recruit volunteers to represent students in their educational planning;
3. Develop and maintain a training manual of special education procedures and practices as well as advocacy resources;
4. Provide training to new volunteers and retraining to existing volunteers;
5. Conduct a minimum of 25 (6-hour) trainings annually;
6. Assist in the provision of guidance to the volunteers regarding the educational surrogate parents process (i.e., clarification of reporting activities);
7. Assist in the maintenance of accurate contact information for the educational surrogate parents;
8. Conduct participant evaluations for all training activities, aggregate and analyze the data, and report the findings to ISBE;
9. Conduct nonpublic program evaluations of the program, aggregate and analyze the data, and report the findings to ISBE.

Personnel Qualifications: The grantee must employ or subcontract with personnel who have a special education background and who are uniquely qualified to perform the work outlined in this RFP. For the purpose of this grant, ISBE does not require specific educational qualifications, with the exception that all professional staff must possess skills to successfully conduct activities geared to the recruitment of volunteers and have demonstrated experience in providing training. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that include a staffing structure for the implementation of the recruitment and training portion of the Educational Surrogate Parents Program. To that end, proposed positions must be described, and personnel must be named and supported with documented qualifications. Each proposal must provide the following personnel information as appendices to the proposal.

- Organizational chart reflecting the proposed staffing structure;
- Current job description for each proposed position; and
- Current résumé or curriculum vitae for each proposed staff member.

Reporting Requirements: The successful applicant will be responsible for submitting two types of project reports to ISBE in a midyear report and an annual cumulative report.

1. Progress Reporting: Information must be reported relative to the types of activities, services, and trainings provided according to the expected deliverables mentioned above in Program Specifications.

2. Expenditure Reporting: Fiscal information must be reported relative to project expenditures and in accordance with the State and Federal Grant Administration Policy and Fiscal Requirements and Procedures handbook.

Cumulative semiannual reports will be due to ISBE according to the schedule provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semiannual Reporting</th>
<th>Cumulative Reporting Periods</th>
<th>Report Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project Begin Date through December 31</td>
<td>January 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Project Begin Date through June 30</td>
<td>July 20</td>
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**Project Evaluation:** Data collection, regarding the services administered by the grantee and an analysis thereof, is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and to make subsequent decisions regarding the ongoing improvement of services. Applicants must provide an evaluation plan that includes a complete description of how the project’s effectiveness will be evaluated. The evaluation plan must include a description of how proposed procedures and instruments will be used to determine the extent to which the project objectives (i.e., deliverables) will be met. Attachment 2 is provided for this portion of the proposal.

**Fiscal Information**

One grant will be awarded for FY 2013 in an amount not to exceed $115,000. The initial and subsequent grant awards will be dependent upon the needs addressed and scope of activities in each year of the grant and the total appropriation for the program. Allowable expenditures include the following.

- Salaries and benefits for professional and support staff directly related to the purposes of the project;
- Office space rental and associated utilities;
- Program and office supplies directly related to the purposes of the project;
- Travel expenses to and from meetings and trainings for project personnel;

  *Travel expenses must be paid in accordance with local policies and be most cost effective. Travel expenses, including transportation costs and, where overnight stay is required, lodging, and per diem, are subject to the state rates according to the Governor’s Travel Control Board as outlined in the Reimbursement Schedule of the Travel Guide for State of Illinois Employees and any annual changes therein.*

- Printing of training manuals, stationary, envelopes, brochures, and flyers;
- Space rental for trainings;
- Stipends for educational surrogate parents attendance to training;
- Payment of educational surrogate parents background checks;
- General administration, fiscal services, data processing services, and/or indirect costs associated with the overall administration may be proposed. These costs, however, must be cumulatively limited to not more than three (3) percent of the total funding request. *(Note: Indirect costs cannot be claimed if either fiscal services or data processing services are requested.)*

**Proposal Narrative Requirements**

Applicants must propose a plan that demonstrates a sound approach to carrying out the project by responding to each of the following prompts. All activities must purport to build the capacity of the Illinois Educational Surrogate Parents Program to serve the needs of special education students who are wards of the state, are unaccompanied homeless youth, or whose parent(s) cannot be identified or located and are in need of parental representation. Of great importance is the extent to which the proposed plan has a strong likelihood of fulfilling project objectives (i.e., deliverables) as outlined in the *Program Specifications* sections of this RFP.

The proposal narrative must be double-spaced with a 12-point font and one-inch margins and may not exceed ten (10) pages in length. Information exceeding the ten-page limit will not be included in the proposal review process.
1. **Experience and Expertise:**
   
   A. Describe the applicant’s experience and expertise recruiting community volunteers;
   
   B. Describe the applicant’s experience and expertise in developing training manuals;
   
   C. Describe the applicant’s experience and expertise in the provision of trainings, including the number of trainings per year, the targeted audience, the average number of participants, and whether the trainings were conducted locally, regionally, or throughout the state;
   
   D. Describe the applicant’s experience and expertise in conducting evaluations, aggregating, and analyzing data for purposes of improvement of project activities and services;
   
   E. Describe the applicant’s experience and expertise in the area of special education.

2. **Capacity:**
   
   A. Describe the applicant’s proposed work plan for providing each of the project deliverables as listed in the *Program Specifications* section of this RFP, including how the applicant will establish and maintain a statewide recruitment and training system.
   
   B. Discuss the capacity of the applicant to administer the project, specifically addressing how the proposed staffing structure and identified personnel will contribute to the applicant’s capacity to perform the work outlined in this RFP *(see Personnel Qualifications)*.
   
   C. Describe how the applicant will evaluate the project as outlined under the *Project Evaluation* section.
   
   D. Describe how the applicant will account for the allocation and expenditure of federal grant funds as outlined in the *Fiscal Information*.

**Proposal Format**

Each proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. Please use the following as a checklist in assembling the completed proposal.

___ 1. **Cover Page (Attachment 1):** Include the name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address of applicant; name and telephone number of the responsible agent or contact person, as appropriate. The cover page must be signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal.

___ 2. **Evaluation Design (Attachment 2):** Describe the evaluation procedures and instruments to be used to determine the extent to which the stated objectives will have been met.

___ 3. **Proposal Narrative (Attachment 3):** Provide a response to each prompt listed in the *Proposal Narrative Requirements* section of this RFP. The Proposal Narrative must be double-spaced, using 12-point font size, and have one-inch margins. The Proposal Narrative may not exceed ten (10) pages in length. Pages exceeding the maximum length will not be included in the proposal review.

___ 4. **Budget Summary (Attachment 4):** Must be submitted on the form provided and signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal.

___ 5. **Budget Summary Breakdown (Attachment 5):** Must include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures, correlated to the line items set forth on the Budget Summary. Must include subcontract information; if applicable (see item #7 of the document titled *Certification and Assurances and Standard Terms of the Grant*, Attachment 5).
6. **Certifications and Assurances (Attachments 6 - 8):** Each applicant is required to submit the following certifications and assurances. These must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.

   - Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, Attachment 6
   - Program-Specific Terms of the Grant, Attachment 7
   - Certification and Assurances and Standard Terms of the Grant, Attachment 8
   - Certification Regarding Debarment, Attachment 9
   - Certification Regarding Lobbying, Attachments 10 – 10C
   - General Education Provisions Act, Attachment 11

7. **Appendices:** Each applicant is required to submit the following personnel information as appendices to the proposal.

   - Organizational chart reflecting the proposed staffing structure
   - Current job description for each proposed position, and
   - Current résumé or curriculum vitae for each proposed staff member

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**Criteria for Review and Approval of Proposals**

Proposals will be evaluated in comparison with other proposals received by the Illinois State Board of Education, scored according to the criteria below, and ranked by score. The total number of points possible is 100. Final determination for selection will be made by the State Superintendent of Education and will be based upon recommendations resulting from the proposal review process.

1. **Experience and Expertise:** (50 points)
   - A. Applicant’s experience and expertise recruiting community volunteers (10 points);
   - B. Applicant’s experience and expertise in developing training manuals (10 points);
   - C. Applicant’s experience and expertise in the provision of trainings (10 points);
   - D. Applicant’s experience and expertise in conducting evaluations, aggregating and analyzing data for purposes of improvement of project activities and services (10 points);
   - E. Applicant’s experience and expertise in the area of special education (10 points).

2. **Capacity:** (50 points)
   - A. Applicant’s proposed work plan for providing each of the project deliverables as listed in the Program Specifications section of this RFP, including how the applicant will establish and maintain a statewide recruitment and training system (25 points);
   - B. Applicant’s capacity to administer the project (10 points);
   - C. Applicant’s capacity to implement the proposed evaluation design (10 points);
   - D. Applicant’s capacity to account for the allocation and expenditure of federal grant funds as outlined in the Fiscal Information (5 points).