

**REQUESTS FOR APPLICATIONS – ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RELATED TO RFA**

**1. What training & coaching will be available from AIM?**

The specific menu of training and coaching available to sites will be jointly developed between AIM, Leadership Council, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP). It should be expected, however, from site selection through June 30, 2011, the following will be provided:

- All sites will have 2.5 days of training presented by AIM that will focus on issues such as primer on AR (.5 day), procedural changes (.5 day), pathway assignment (.5 day) and assessment and engagement techniques (1 day).
- Each agency will have a community forum to help partners understand the changes that will be occurring within the agency's approach with families. This may include AIM, representation of Ohio's operational pilot sites, or both.
- Each agency will have at least two on-site coaching experiences provided by AIM.
- Each agency will have the opportunity to send its AR workers and supervisors to quarterly in-person (face-to-face) meetings.
- The new sites will be a part of Ohio's Leadership Council, the partnership group of Ohio's alternative response sites. As such, they will have the opportunity to participate in all activities available to the Council. In the past, this has included:
  - On-site coaching.
  - Specialized training opportunities
  - Peer review opportunities
  - Quarterly Leadership Council activities

State and consultant staff also hope to work with experienced counties and the OCWTP to develop ongoing opportunities to support agencies through additional shadowing, mentoring, and peer-directed activities.

**2. Will the training be just for Alternative Response staff or can the entire staff be trained?**

It is recommended that all agency staff participate in an introductory training session. The importance of training *all* agency staff was an early lesson from Ohio's first pilots' experiences. The majority of staff does not require the same level of exposure as AR staff<sup>1</sup>; however, an understanding of the principles of

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, "AR staff" is intended to mean administrators, supervisors and caseworkers that directly oversee or provide services to families through the alternative response pathway.

alternative response –what it is and isn’t—is critical to successful organizational implementation. This introductory training component is an essential piece of avoiding organizational myths about alternative response, e.g. an alternative response approach is a “better” approach than a traditional response; alternative response is “traditional response light;” safety is not a concern with alternative response, etc. All-staff training also helps to avoid internal friction between organizational units.

Acknowledging the lesson learned and the goal to have *all* agency staff receive introductory training on AR, capacity and relevance will determine the appropriateness of participation by non-AR staff in AR-specific training experiences. Where there are capacity limitations, preference will be provided to the AR workers, supervisors and administrators. By and large, ongoing AR training primarily has been directed to AR staff.

### **3. Would it be advantageous for counties to apply as a group?**

No, there is no advantage. The purpose of this RFA is enable ten additional counties to make alternative response programming available to families. As a part of that work, ODJFS is agreeing to: extend legal authorization to operate within Ohio’s AR rules and processes; support these sites; ensure their integration into the Leadership Council; partner with the Supreme Court of Ohio on their behalf; and, extend to them AIM and other AR-specific resources available within the parameters of the pilot project.

The limit of ten counties is a capacity issue. Alternative response cases are screened-in reports of child abuse and neglect and the safety of children must remain paramount. This approach is based upon the development of new skills, resources and organizational beliefs, along with the procedural changes that are involved. Capacity is limited by the ability to make sufficient resources available for counties to initiate programming with adequate preparation and ongoing support to maintain child safety. The state will be working with AIM to offer new sites a level of support that the experiences of the initial ten pilots have indicated as beneficial to successful implementation. If five counties applied as a consortium, they would be counted as five of the ten.

We know that Ohio’s goal is state-wide implementation and that the state must be moving from the pilot’s dependence upon outside consultants to the development of its own resources to support the work. Concurrent with the limited expansion of this RFA, the state also will be working to identify those elements and recommendations from the study that are essential to building a state infrastructure that is capable of sufficiently supporting full-scale implementation. The focus during this time will be to transition responsibilities and build an infrastructure that will allow the state to open up the rolls to all 88 counties.

### **4. Will it be required to have a control group for the Alternative Response cases?**

No, Ohio has completed its evaluation and will not require pilots to randomly assign cases or establish a control group. ODJFS has accountability for pilots, however, and will be collecting limited data.

Information from the pilots also is helpful in better understanding the needs of Ohio's counties for statewide implementation.

#### **5. Is it \$2,000 or \$20,000 per year for the two years?**

This a typographical error that was included in the early RFA release. It has been corrected and appears as \$20,000 per year for two years in the posted versions.

Funding is provided by Casey Family Programs, which operates on a calendar year, January through December. First year funding actually will be for a six month period beginning from selection through December 30, 2010. Second year funding of \$20,000 will be from January 2011 through December 2011. Allocations must be liquidated at the close of each fiscal year. This will be more fully discussed at the May 13<sup>th</sup> session on the RFA.

#### **6. What can or can not the monies be used for?**

Casey Family Programs has allocated these funds to support agencies in the organizational transition that is required to initiate this new programming. It recognizes the diversity of need between counties, and has been extremely flexible in trying to accommodate this variance. As such, these funds have a wide spectrum of allowable spending categories. These funds must be used to support alternative response programming, either in the development, oversight, or provision of services. This could include expenditures categories such as: AR staff, including payroll; training; travel related to alternative response functioning; purchase of services; consultant costs; costs associated with public events such as AR community forum, etc.

It should not be used for expendable items such as paper, printing, or supplies. For example, in the past, Casey Family Programs dollars were used to contract with a marketing firm to design a brochure for families, but alternate funds were used to pay for the ongoing printing of the document.

#### **7. What data will we be required to collect?**

ODJFS staff is working to identify the specific data that agencies will be required to collect. This will be fully described at the May 13<sup>th</sup> symposium session. In determining data parameters, ODJFS has set these priorities:

- Making sure it is not an onerous process for agencies.
- Extracting as much of the data as possible at a state level from SACWIS.
- Asking only for data that serves a clearly defined purpose, e.g. is this necessary for our accountability and/or is it a piece of information that clearly could help clarify an element related to state-wide implementation?

#### **8. Will there be funding available per case for families?**

This question refers to the Children's Trust Fund dollars that were available to each county in the initial pilot to support services for families. This funding was linked to completed service plans as a part of the state's data-gathering activities. These were project-limited dollars that no longer are available.

Clearly, agencies found advantage in the flexibility and immediacy in services that these dollars brought. Although not available at this time, ODJFS continues to seek alternative and/or supplemental funding for services that provides the same advantages and flexibility.

**9. I read that there is a plan for alternative response to expand to 50 counties within the next two years. Is this true? Waiting for the next round would give me the time I need to plan better.**

It is clear that Ohio intends to take alternative response statewide. This is the recommendation of the ten pilots and AIM's final report. Qualitative data supports the immediate value and potential long-term benefit of expanding the availability of this approach to families in all of Ohio's 88 counties. The decisions of how and when that is to be accomplished have been delayed so that the findings of the study and recommendations of the final report are fully considered in the determination of time frame and methodology.

If you do not feel that there is adequate time for your agency to apply to become an alternative response pilot under this RFA, the opportunity to expand your programming again will be available. What that opportunity looks like, the exact timing of it, and the resources that may accompany the opportunity have not been determined.

It is a great idea to begin your internal planning and work with external organizations now so that you are prepared to be in the next round of counties that implement alternative response. The item which is sure: Ohio is moving towards statewide implementation of an alternative response approach.

Thank you for your interest.