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**The School District of Pittsburgh  
(Pittsburgh, PA)**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**

**CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDER FOR MENTAL HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Issue Date: January 5, 2026**

**Submission Deadline: February 2, 2026, by Noon**

[www.pghschools.org](http://www.pghschools.org)

Parent Hotline: 412-529-HELP (4357)

The Pittsburgh Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, gender (including gender identity or expression), sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, or disability in its programs, activities or employment and provides equal access to designated youth groups. Inquiries may be directed to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services at 341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 or (412) 529-HELP (4357).



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## Introduction

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), through its Department of Early Childhood Education Programs, is soliciting proposals from qualified Contracted Service Providers (CSP) to deliver necessary related services for students (ages Birth to 5) and families, including those with disabilities, in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and district regulations.

The Early Childhood Program is need of a local, qualified CSP to provide individual consultations to children, child assessments and data management, mental health intervention services for children and families and facilitate professional development for staff, as mandated by the granting agencies' funding provisions. This contract is crucial in meeting the Head Start federal grant compliance requirement ([1302.45 Supports for mental health and well-being](#)) as well as for PA PreK Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program grant compliance. These services are to be delivered in person and/or virtually.

The CSP must operate within Eastern Standard Time (EST). While not a requirement, providers located within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will be considered during the evaluation process.

The contract is scheduled to commence on **July 1, 2026**, and continue through **June 30, 2028**, with fixed rates for the entire duration of the contract, contingent upon full execution of the contract.

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## Early Childhood Mission

The Early Childhood Education Program, including Early Intervention, Early Head Start, Head Start, Head Start Supplemental, and PreK Counts, provides an array of intentional and equitable learning experiences and supportive services to children and their families so they have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence in a healthy, safe, and playful environment.

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## Early Childhood Vision

All children and families will be prepared for kindergarten and beyond with the building blocks necessary for life-long learning, critical thinking, joy, and social-emotional wellness.

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## Early Childhood Core Values/Beliefs

- Program staff bring their best each day to help our children learn and grow
- Families are an essential part of the educational process



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- There is shared stakeholder responsibility between the staff, families, and the community for the growth and development of our children
- We believe we are helping to develop global citizens who care about the well-being of others and the community around them
- We value diversity, culture, and the heritage of all children and families
- Children must be connected to their past and future
- We believe all children can learn and develop if their individuality is respected
- Children and adults can learn from each other
- The health, safety, and well-being of children are always top priorities
- Children’s “play” is their work
- We are committed to establishing a community where children, families, and staff will be engaged in challenging and joyful environments that encourages children to learn and grow confident.

## Background

<https://www.pghschools.org/about/facts-at-a-glance/facts-at-a-glance>

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) is the largest of 43 school districts in Allegheny County and the second largest in the state of Pennsylvania. PPS serves over 19,570 students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 across 54 schools, employing close to 4,500 staff members, including 1,848 teachers, with a general budget of \$731.3 million. The Early Childhood Program is comprised of 85 preschool classrooms, 6 Early Head Start (EHS) classrooms, and 25 childcare partnership programs serving over 2,000 children.

PPS is committed to providing high-quality education and related services to all students, including those with disabilities, ensuring that they achieve success in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The student demographics at Pittsburgh Public Schools is as follows:

- Native languages spoken by students: 58
- African American students: 53%
- White students: 33%
- Other races: 14%

This diversity underscores the need for a CSP who is not only highly qualified but also sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences, ensuring that all students' needs are met equitably and effectively.

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## Scope of Work and Services

The selected CSP will be responsible for delivering trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive support services to staff, students (ages Birth to Five, including those with disabilities) enrolled in PPS District classrooms and childcare partnership locations, and their families through in-person support, off-site support, as well as providing written materials or electronic communication to stakeholders.

The CSP will provide individual consultations and mental health intervention services to children and families, training coordination for staff, child assessments, and data management. The CSP will have licensed psychologists on staff to provide referrals for further mental health evaluations, as needed. The CSP will also facilitate professional development training (virtual or in-person) for staff and parents/caregivers.

CSP will provide on-site education training, consultation, technical assistance and support to educators and parents/caregivers using researched-based interventions that focus on the individuality of the child, taking age into consideration, and the family and community dynamics so that intentional interventions can be implemented to empower them to create environments where all children can thrive.

CSP will provide multi-tiered systems of approaches including, but not limited to, on-site/off-site team support and small group training, analyzing child assessments, and crisis intervention/prevention support to children, staff, and families.

CSP will assist staff with the implementation, management, and monitoring of a research-based parenting curriculum. that focuses on enhancing parental knowledge and provides structured opportunities for parents to practice skills that support children's development.

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## Provider Requirements

The CSP must fully meet the following essential requirements:

- **Qualified and Professional Staff:** All staff must be fully trained, licensed, and capable of providing the highest standard of care and education.
- **Experience and Qualifications:** Providers must demonstrate significant experience in providing similar services to students, ages Birth to Five and their families, including those with disabilities.
- **Staff Flexibility:** Providers must be able to quickly adjust staffing levels based on fluctuating needs as requested by Early Childhood.



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- **Reliability:** Providers must ensure consistent staffing with no gaps in service. Failure to provide adequate staffing may result in violations of a student's rights under FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education), potentially leading to compensatory education claims. A documented company policy or procedure must be in place to ensure strict adherence to attendance and punctuality standards. This policy will be essential in maintaining the continuity of services provided to students, ensuring no disruption to their educational needs.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Staff must comply with all federal, State (PA), and local regulations, including certification, licensure, background checks, and current CPR/AED/First Aid certifications (CPR/AED training must be completed in person). The provider is responsible for ensuring that the required clearances are maintained and remain in compliance.
- **Collaboration:** Providers must work effectively with PPS staff, families, and students, adhering to established communication protocols.
- **Professional Development:** Providers must ensure that all staff members complete required professional development. Documentation on all training must be maintained and available for audit purposes.

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## Contracted Service Provider (CSP) Responsibilities

The selected CSP is required to fulfill the following key responsibilities:

- **Timely Provision of Qualified Staff:** Ensure that qualified personnel are consistently placed in required positions. Any gaps in staffing may result in denials of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) and could lead to potential compensatory education expenses for the district.
- **Timely Provision of Summary Data/Reporting:** Providers must maintain and submit, as requested, comprehensive documentation and reports to support informed decision-making and maintain compliance with grant requirements.
- **Electronic Devices for Documentation:** Providers must supply functioning electronic devices (laptops, Chromebooks) for staff, with the ability to access PPS's Wi-Fi and documentation systems. Devices must be compatible with district-approved software platforms to ensure accurate and efficient service recording.
- **ID Badges and Identification:** All staff must prominently wear the ID badges issued by the CSP while on school property.



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- **After-Hours Availability:** Ensure constant accessibility for addressing staffing-related issues during extreme emergencies, including troubleshooting and reassigning staff, outside of regular school hours.
- **Data Security:** Providers must strictly adhere to confidentiality protocols in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) to always ensure the protection of student data.
- **High-Quality Standards:** Providers must maintain high standards of care and full regulatory compliance by conducting regular performance evaluations and establishing feedback loops with PPS. This process will allow for timely assessment and improvement of service quality and effectiveness, addressing any concerns promptly.

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## Timetable/Response Submittal

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), Early Childhood Education Programs is soliciting proposals from experienced and qualified agencies. The selection of one consultant will be based on the proposals submitted, with an interview conducted if necessary. A timetable for the selection process is outlined below:

- **Release of RFP:** January 5, 2026
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** February 2, 2026 (Noon)
- **Possible Interviews (if needed):** Starting the week of February 16, 2026
- **Recommendation for Selection:** By February 25, 2026
- **Legislative Session – Contract Approval by the Board of Directors:** March 25, 2026
- **Contract Commencement – Upon Full Execution of Contract:** July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2028 (with fixed rates to align with Head Start grant funding)

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**Upon the release of this RFP and during the conclusion of the selection process, there shall be no communication between any prospective respondents, their lobbyist(s) or agent(s), and any employee of PPS or its elected Board of Directors, except as provided for in the RFP. Any violation of this provision by any prospective firm and/or its agent shall be grounds for immediate disqualification.**

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## Proposal Submission Guidelines

Proposals must be submitted electronically via email or fax by **Noon on February 2, 2026**.

All proposals shall be submitted to the School District of Pittsburgh as follows:

**Mrs. Kimberly Russo Joseph | Executive Director**  
Pittsburgh Public Schools, Early Childhood Education Programs |  
1398 Page Street | Pittsburgh, PA 15233  
Tel: 412-529-4291, Option 2  
eFax: 412-224-4937  
Email: [krusso1@pghschools.org](mailto:krusso1@pghschools.org)

Proposals should not exceed 10 pages on 8 ½" X 11" paper (including the cover letter, budget narrative, references, and all attachments, excluding bios), single-spaced, with a minimum font size of 12 pt.

## For Inquiries

Please contact Ms. Russo Joseph at [krusso1@pghschools.org](mailto:krusso1@pghschools.org) or **412-529-4291, Option 2**.

- Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be accepted or considered.
- Proposals must be clearly marked **CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDER (CSP) FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**.
- No amendments to proposals shall be accepted after the proposal has been submitted.

Proposals should be submitted in accordance with the instructions outlined below. PPS reserves the right to select a proposal in its entirety or in part. Any proposals submitted after the deadline or that fail to meet the required submission criteria may be disqualified. Additionally, PPS reserves the right to reject any proposals and waive any irregularities. The proposal must include:

Proposals should address the following questions or requests for information:

### I. Letter of Transmittal

Each proposal should be accompanied by a letter of transmittal that summarizes the proposal's key points and is signed by an authorized officer.

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Provide brief biographies of the partners and employees who will support the PPS account, including their relevant experience. Only include those individuals who will actively work on the PPS account and specify their roles in the project. Describe any relevant experience with board member governance training, including prior work with other school districts. Additionally, please provide three professional references.

**III. Company Information/Equal Employment Opportunity**

- A. Describe your company's equal employment opportunity policies and programs.
- B. Has your company or any of its employees, or anyone acting on its behalf, ever been convicted of any crime or offense arising directly or indirectly from the conduct of your company's business or have any of your company's officers, directors or persons exercising substantial policy discretion ever been convicted of any crime or offense, i.e., financial misconduct, fraud, or child abuse? If so, please describe any such convictions and surrounding circumstances in detail.
- C. Has your company, or any of its employees, or anyone acting on its behalf, been indicted or otherwise charged in connection with any criminal matter arising directly or indirectly from the conduct of your company's business which is still pending or have any of your company's officers, directors or persons exercising substantial policy discretion been indicted or otherwise charged in connection with any criminal matter, i.e., financial misconduct, fraud or child abuse which is still pending? If so, please describe any such indictments and surrounding circumstances in detail.

**IV. Scope of Work Plan**

Submit a comprehensive work plan that outlines the services to be provided, including a detailed process and timeline to ensure adequate daily staffing of related service providers. The plan must clearly demonstrate how the staffing requirements outlined in the Scope of Work and Services will be met, ensuring sufficient manpower to manage the volume and complexity of the specified services. All components of the Scope of Work and Services must be addressed in the plan.

**V. Fee Proposal**

Submit a detailed fee structure for providing related services to the Early Childhood Education Programs, based on the services outlined in your comprehensive work plan. The proposal must include the total cost, itemized hourly or daily rates for each related service provider, and separate costs for the company's profit and overhead. Any additional costs associated with the services must also be itemized. Travel expenses for related service providers should be excluded from the proposal.



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### Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process

The contract will be awarded to the proposer(s) whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Early Childhood Program, based on the evaluation criteria outlined below. While the evaluation criteria and corresponding points reflect their relative importance, the total scores will not necessarily determine the award. Instead, the overall scores will serve as a guide to help the Early Childhood Program make an informed decision.

PPS Early Childhood Program reserves the right to request interviews with proposers within the competitive range and may consider the information gathered during these interviews as part of the final evaluation.

PPS Early Childhood Program anticipates selecting one CSP based on the following criteria:

- **Background, Experience, and Past Performance** (25 points)
- **Ability to Meet PPS, Early Childhood's Needs** (25 points)
- **Plan of Scope of Work and Services** (25 points)
- **Cost-effectiveness** (detailed cost breakdown) of the proposal (25 points)

The Contracted Service Provider (CSP) For Behavioral Health and Social Emotional Support Services will be selected by **March 25, 2026**.

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## Eligible Business Enterprise (EBE) Participation

### 1. EBE Goal

An aspirational Eligible Business Enterprise (EBE) goal of 10% for business diversity spending has been assigned for this contract opportunity. EBE is a collective of firms that are certified in one or more of the following business diversity categories, registered in our online EBE directory, and used to track the district's diversity spend:

- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
- U. S. Small Business Administration 8(A)

### 2. Proposed Business Diversity Utilization

Is your firm a certified MBE, WBE, DBE, or 8(A) firm? If so, please provide proof of current certification from a certifying entity. Self-certification is not accepted.

Please also provide detailed information regarding any additional business entity that will assist in completing the scope of work defined by this solicitation. This should include the following:

- Company Name
- Company Contact (including title, email, and phone number)
- Scope of Work
- Dollar Amount & Percentage of Contract
- Company Diversity Type (provide proof for each certified firm
  - MBE, WBE, DBE, 8(A), Diverse but not certified, N/A

### 3. Good Faith Effort

If no portion of this contract is awarded to a diverse business, specifically \$0 or 0% diversity spend, please provide detailed information addressing your firm's culture for business diversity & inclusion.

- Diversity Spend: How much money did your company spend with certified MBE, WBE, DBE, or 8(a) firms last year? What was the diversity percentage based on your total spending?
- Diversity Count: What is the total number of MBE, WBE, DBE, or 8(A) firms your company contracted with last year? Please itemize by each diversity type as well.
- Membership: Are you a member of any supplier/business diversity organization? If so, please share the organization's name and provide details concerning your involvement with that organization.

For additional documentation related to EBE policies, the proposer should visit the district's website at:

<https://www.pghschools.org/mwbe> or contact Paula B. Castleberry, Minority/Women Business Coordinator, [pcastleberry1@pghschools.org](mailto:pcastleberry1@pghschools.org)