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The School District of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, PA)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

CONTRACTED STAFFING PROVIDER FOR THERAPEUTIC SERVICES AND OUTPATIENT THERAPY PROVIDERS

Issue Date: February 24, 2026

Submission Deadline: April 7, 2026, by Noon

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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).



Students first

Always, in all ways.

Introduction

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), through its Department of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE), Emotional Support Program, solicit proposals from qualified Contracted Staffing Providers to deliver necessary therapy services for students, including those with disabilities, in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and district regulations. The required staffing positions, determined by the needs of students and in compliance with relevant educational and mental health standards, are as follows:

- Therapists to provide Crisis Management as well as group and individual services for students in the Emotional Support classrooms

These positions will provide services in accordance with Outpatient Regulations. Services must be flexible and adjusted based on changes in student needs as determined by IEP teams or Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS)

The Contracted Staffing Provider(s) 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, 2027**, with fixed rates for the entire duration of the contract, contingent upon full execution of the contract.

District Mission

The selected provider(s) will support students in making educational progress within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) by ensuring the delivery of related services tailored to meet each student's individual needs. Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) and the Contracted Staffing Provider(s) will work collaboratively to provide continuous, high-quality services, delivered by skilled and reliable professionals, to foster student independence and success in the LRE. These services will be provided throughout the school year.

District Vision

All students will achieve meaningful progress toward their educational goals and graduate prepared

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for success in college, career, and life—equipped to pursue either a two- or four-year college degree or obtain a workforce certification.

Background

PPS serves over 18,000 students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 across 54 schools, employing more than 4,000 staff members, with a general budget of \$752.3 million. 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 district's student population is diverse, with 53% African American, 33% White, and 14% other, including more than 1,100 English Language Learners who speak 58 native languages. This diversity underscores the need for

staffing providers who are not only highly qualified but also sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences, ensuring that all students' needs are met equitably and effectively.

Scope of Work and Services

The selected Contracted Staffing Provider will be responsible for delivering services to all students, including those with disabilities. The essential duties associated with this position is outlined below; however, this list is not intended to be exhaustive:

Therapists

- **Provide therapeutic crisis management for all students, daily.**
- **Prepare and teach 2-3 social skills groups per week – teaching replacement behaviors, coping strategies, self-regulation techniques, etc.**
- **Sign in daily on the school's attendance sheet. If the therapist is absent for an extended illness or personal reasons, the agency should provide a substitute to take their place.**
- **Complete intake expectations with family in a timely fashion (within 2 weeks of student transition to the classroom).**

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- Provide a minimum of one individual therapy session for each student per week.
- Monitor students' positive behavior on the daily point sheet (T.A.L.I.D.), in conjunction with the teacher and RBT.
- Monitor and support the students' transition back into the regular education classes.
- Assist in the ongoing management and implementation of the behavior system in the emotional support classroom.
- Assist in the assessment of at-risk students to determine the need for more immediate evaluations for intensive treatment programs.
- Take the lead on mental health referrals if a higher level or additional support is warranted. Ensure regular communication with school counselor/social worker and the team.
- Collaborate with outside mental health providers/agencies, juvenile probation and crisis programs.
- Assist Parent/Guardian in accessing outside agency involvement for services, case management, medication, intensive service coordination, etc. for their children and themselves.
- Develop positive behavioral strategies/replacement behaviors in collaboration with the teacher and Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) for students who have chronic behavior challenges.
- Provide an optional monthly family therapy session that may include:
 - Parenting skills
 - Medication education
 - Behavior management strategies to use at home
 - Stress reduction/problem solving
 - Assisting in accessing mental health services for themselves or children
- The therapist will follow the same school district schedule (including snow days) as the teacher. Therapist and teacher work the same number of student days/hours, beginning and ending at the same time.

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- On district in-service days, the therapist will report to their agency for in-service training provided by the agency or paperwork completion.
- Attend monthly team meetings and have the following available: mental health diagnosis, current medication regime, treatment plan, behavioral progress and outside agency involvement.
- The therapist will be familiar with and assist with the intake process for in-patient and partial hospitalization placements.
- The therapist should offer case management and CACTIS services to the Parent/Guardian.

Provider Requirements Contracted Staffing Provider 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. Staff must complete the required training, including, but not limited to, de-escalation and mandated reporter training.
- **Experience and Qualifications:** Agencies may determine appropriate experience and qualifications. All therapists must be able to obtain necessary PA clearances.
- **Staff Flexibility:** Providers must be able to quickly adjust staffing levels based on fluctuating needs as requested by PPS.
- **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). 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.
- **Payroll and Documentation System:** Providers must utilize system for payroll, billing, and time tracking. Devices compatible with PPS's district Wi-Fi must be provided to staff to ensure the timely and accurate completion of documentation, including service logs.

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- **Compliance with Regulations:** Staff must comply with all federal, State (PA), and local regulations, including certification, licensure, and background checks. 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 hours of relevant professional development annually, with training tailored to their specific roles. Documentation on all training must be maintained and available for audit purposes.

Contracted Staffing Provider Responsibilities

The selected Contracted Staffing Provider(s) are required to fulfill the following key responsibilities:

- **Timely Provision of Qualified Staff:** Ensure that qualified personnel are consistently placed in required positions.
- **Staff Coverage:** Ensure full staffing coverage for this position.
- **Clinical Oversight and Supervision:** Assign a Clinical Supervisor or similar role to oversee ongoing training, competency evaluations, and staff support.
- **Documentation Compliance:** Providers must ensure that all documentation is accurate, timely, and fully compliant with Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) 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 Contracted Staffing Provider while on school property or District-operated vehicles.
- **Data Security:** Providers must strictly adhere to confidentiality protocols in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance

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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.

Timetable/Response Submittal

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), through its Department of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) requests proposals from experienced and qualified companies. The selection of one or more consultants 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:** February 24, 2026
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** April 7, 2026
- **Possible Interviews (if needed):** Starting April 8, 2026
- **Recommendation for Selection:** By April 21, 2026
- **Legislative Session – Contract Approval by the Board of Directors:**
 - **Contract Commencement – Upon Full Execution of Contract:** July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027 (with fixed rates for the entire duration of the contract)

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.**

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Any violation of this provision by any prospective firm and/or its agent shall be grounds for immediate disqualification.

Proposal Submission Guidelines

Proposals must be submitted electronically via email by **Noon on April 7, 2026**.

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

Ms. Reena Maharaja | Emotional Support Program Officer
School District of Pittsburgh
Program for Students with Exceptionalities | PSE
2323 Brighton Road | Pittsburgh, PA 15212
Tel: 412-529-5813
Email: rmaharaja1@pghschools.org

Proposals should not exceed 30 pages on 8 ½" X 11" paper (including the cover letter, budget narrative, references, and all attachments), single-spaced, with a minimum font size of 10 pt.

For Inquiries

Please contact Ms. Reena Maharaja (rmaharaja1@pghschools.org)

- Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be accepted or considered.
- Proposals must be clearly marked-**CONTRACTED STAFFING PROVIDER FOR THERAPEUTIC SERVICES AND OUTPATIENT THERAPY PROVIDERS**
- 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:

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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.

II. Experience and Qualifications

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.

I. 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.

II. 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.

III. Fee Proposal

Submit a detailed fee structure for providing Therapeutic Services and Outpatient Therapy

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Providers to the Department of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities based on the services outlined in your comprehensive work plan. The proposal must include the total cost, itemized hourly or daily rates for this 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 providers should be excluded from the proposal.

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), 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 PPS make an informed decision.

PPS 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 anticipates selecting one or more Contracted Staffing Provider for Related Services based on the following criteria:

Background, Experience, and Past Performance (25 points)

- **Ability to Meet PPS Needs** (25 points)
- **Plan of Scope of Work and Services**, (25 points)
- **Cost-effectiveness** (detailed cost breakdown) of the proposal (25 points)

The Contracted Staffing Provider(s) for Related Services will be selected by **April 21, 2026**.

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)

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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



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