

# Request for Information

## Youth Support Specialist Pipeline

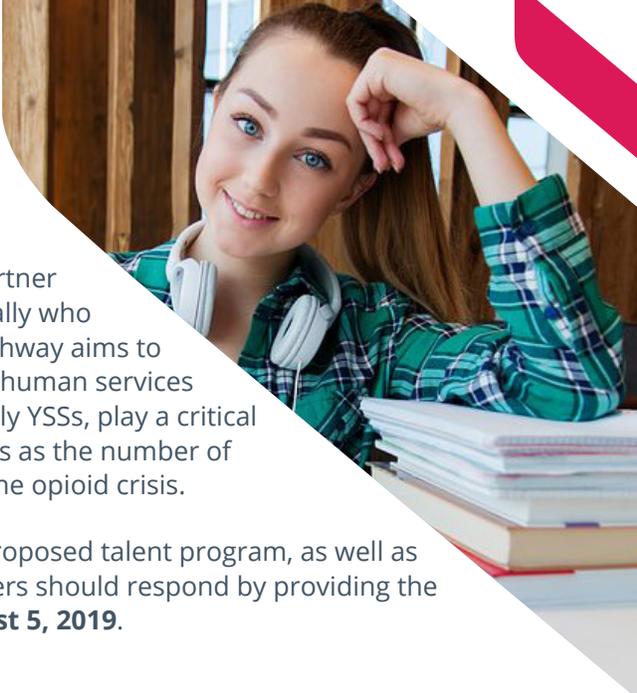


**To:** Education Partners  
**From:** Ascend Indiana + Lutheran Child and Family Services



*Response requested by August 5, 2019*





## Purpose

Lutheran Child Family Services (LCFS) is seeking an education partner to co-create a pathway to employment for 25–30 students annually who are prepared for the Youth Support Specialist (YSS) role. This pathway aims to include the attainment of professional field-based experience in human services and a certificate from the education partner. LCFS, and specifically YSSs, play a critical role in addressing the behavioral health needs of Indiana families as the number of children in need of residential services continues to rise due to the opioid crisis.

This Request for Information (RFI) provides an overview of the proposed talent program, as well as the process of selecting an education partner. Interested providers should respond by providing the information highlighted below in the guidelines section by **August 5, 2019**.

## Introduction

### Youth Support Specialists Talent Program

The YSS talent development program will provide students with significant career development opportunities at LCFS, a social services agency that plays a critical role in providing residential and community-based services to children and families in Central Indiana. Students in the program will receive tuition assistance, training, work-based experiences, and have the opportunity for employment opportunities with growth potential while earning a certificate in a human services related program. Through the attainment of certification, full-time employees at LCFS have opportunities to move into different roles in the organization.

YSS staff provide direct care to LCFS clients and contribute to client treatment through teaching daily living activities, facilitating pro-social activities, administering treatment plans developed by therapists, and transporting clients to therapy and other mandated activities.

## Project Context

Established in 1883 as the Evangelical Lutheran Orphan Home, LCFS has a long history of serving children, youth, and local communities. With the support of the Community Health Network (CHNw), LCFS plays an important role in caring for youth affected by abuse, neglect, and behavioral health challenges. LCFS manages several core programs through a cooperative arrangement with CHNw. LCFS and CHNw provide an array of child welfare programs through a targeted continuum of care that includes an intensive, secure residential program to serve youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties, an independent living group home for young men, home-based family preservation and counseling services, and emergency shelter care.

***LCFS plays an important role in caring for youth affected by abuse, neglect, and behavioral health challenges.***

LCFS engaged Ascend Indiana (Ascend) to support their talent pipeline efforts. Ascend is the talent and workforce development initiative of Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), an organization that brings together industry, higher education and philanthropic leaders to advance our region’s prosperity and growth. Ascend’s vision is for every Indiana employer to have access to the skilled workforce necessary to thrive and for every Indiana resident to have the opportunity to pursue a meaningful career. To achieve this, Ascend bridges talent and communication gaps by creating connectivity between people and employers. Ascend has focused its efforts around three core priorities: connecting job seekers to career opportunities through the Ascend Network talent

platform, providing strategic consulting to address labor market and talent development gaps through Ascend Services, and informing workforce research and public policy through thought leadership.

## Impact

LCFS faces a shortage of qualified YSSs and, as a result, encounters challenges in staff capacity, training, and ability to impact Central Indiana's most at-risk youth. Relevant information around the misalignment between demand (jobs) and supply (talent) is discussed below to demonstrate the need for developing the YSS talent pipeline.

## Misalignment

LCFS plays a critical role in responding to rising child welfare and behavioral health needs. LCFS' ability to maintain census levels that optimize operational objectives is contingent upon having enough direct care staff to meet state-mandated client to staff ratios. Currently, the number of children in foster care in Indiana due to parental opioid misuse rose 600% between 2003 and 2016<sup>1</sup>, making LCFS's continuum of care services even more essential to the Indiana landscape. Therefore, to serve the community and meet current demand for behavioral health services, it is critically important that LCFS create a sustainable pipeline for a consistent source of qualified talent to provide quality care to Indiana children and families.

## Demand

To maintain facility licensure, regulation dictates staffing ratios. Further, regardless of the total number of clients on a unit, there must always be at least two staff present. A shortage of YSSs would directly impact LCFS' ability to maintain staffing ratios and would require other LCFS staff to step out of their regularly assigned roles and responsibilities and into direct care positions to meet staffing requirements.

***The YSS role provides daily direct care to LCFS clients and is a critical member of the LCFS team. Specifically, YSS staff are responsible for building therapeutic relationships with clients and for contributing to client treatment through teaching activities of daily living, facilitating pro-social activities, administering treatment plans developed by therapists, and transporting clients to therapy and other mandated activities.***

YSSs also complete emergency safety interventions and utilize therapeutic behavior management interventions such as trauma informed care and verbal de-escalation to respond to critical incidents. Additionally, YSSs maintain a safe and clean environment, act as a role model, build rapport with clients, and communicate effectively with leadership and clinical staff both verbally and through written documentation. State licensure regulations and organizational preferences dictate that all YSS staff be at least 21 years of age, have earned their General Education Diploma (GED) or high school diploma, possess a valid driver's license, pass a background check, and have basic physical capabilities.

<sup>1</sup> Indiana University. (2018, May 14). Opioid misuse costs Indiana over \$4 billion annually, study finds. Retrieved from <https://news.iu.edu/stories/2018/05/iu/releases/14-opioid-misuse-costs-indiana-over-4-bil-lion-annually.html>

## Supply

LCFS currently employs 80 to 90 people in the YSS role. YSS staff typically possess a GED or high school diploma. LCFS has not traditionally recruited from specific organizations or established partnerships to address their talent needs. Individuals in the YSS role typically have experience in juvenile detention, child welfare, similar residential facilities, and daycare facilities. However, LCFS seeks to recruit candidates who have earned a certificate in human services, behavioral health, sociology, psychology, or another related field. Additionally, LCFS aims to recruit candidates passionate about youth and helping others.

## Program Overview

### Vision

Establish a sustainable pipeline of talent that begins with YSSs who have earned a certificate, have the opportunity to earn a more advanced degree later in their career pathway, and meet the needs of LCFS' clients.

### Mission

LCFS seeks to provide employment opportunities with growth potential, hands-on experience, tuition support, and mentorship for sustained career success in the human services field. Through the YSS talent pipeline program, LCFS will be able to play a critical role in responding to rising child welfare and behavioral health needs in Indiana.

The focus of this project is to develop a pathway for approximately 25 – 30 YSSs annually. To achieve this goal, LCFS will identify and partner with an education provider in order to train career-ready talent to fill the YSS position. The YSS talent pipeline is the first foundational phase of a more extensive career pathway that will lead to higher education opportunities and more advanced roles at LCFS. This talent pathway will give participants critical knowledge, experience, and tuition assistance in exchange for a work commitment that will lead to a long-term career with an essential social services agency that provides residential and community-based services to children and families in Central Indiana.



## Program Benefits

A successful partnership between LCFS and an education provider will have significant benefits for both parties. The following list provides a high-level overview of benefits for students, including:

- Students will have access to a comprehensive program that will serve as a catalyst for student success through robust curricular and work-based experiences preparing them for a career in human services;
- By taking classes and receiving tangible work experience in parallel, students will earn an applicable certificate while securing employment at LCFS;
- Students will be prepared for success both in the Youth Support Specialist role as well as for future career opportunities at LCFS as Life Skills Clinicians and beyond; and
- Students will be better equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to position themselves for upward mobility and earn median wages or better.

Alongside the benefits for students, the selected education partner will:

- Have the opportunity to develop a strong partnership with both LCFS and its collaborative partner organization, Community Health Network, employers responding to rising child welfare and behavioral health needs in Indiana;
- Have the potential to provide comprehensive education for students to fill direct care roles at one of approximately 90 residential care facilities across the state; and
- Create an innovative partnership to market to prospective students and increase student placements in an institution relevant to their field of study.

The YSS talent pipeline has the potential to enhance the Hoosier workforce and local economy by providing access to a broad talent pool in a high-demand field and fill a vital need in a field devoted to the broader good.

## Request for Information Guidelines

### Education Partner Criteria

LCFS has identified the criteria necessary for an education partner to successfully create a sustainable pipeline to develop YSSs. These criteria fall into the categories of coursework, faculty and administration, financial, and program characteristics. Notably, LCFS would like partners to have aligned course offerings with the YSS role, opportunities for work-and-learn experiences, and part-time offerings to allow employees to participate in educational programming.

Please respond in a Word document or PDF by **August 5, 2019** with an overview of your certificate program that includes evidence based on the criteria listed below. The body of your application must not exceed ten pages. Accompanying documents and evidence may be included as appendices.



## Partner Information

Category	Criteria	Sample Evidence
<b>Coursework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligned course offerings to Trauma Informed Care, Child Development (especially related to maladaptive behaviors), mental health diagnoses, and Crisis Intervention</li> <li>• Curriculum that addresses critical thinking skills and verbal / written communication</li> <li>• Key courses offered in multiple semesters</li> <li>• Willingness to expand course offerings</li> <li>• Opportunities for work and learn / apprenticeship structure</li> <li>• Part-time program offerings</li> <li>• Online program / course offerings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course maps</li> <li>• Course syllabi</li> <li>• Course offerings schedules</li> <li>• Statement of willingness to expand course offerings</li> <li>• Examples of work and learn / and apprenticeship experiences</li> <li>• Program offerings options (i.e. online, part-time)</li> <li>• Identification of mental health diagnoses, child development concepts, etc. within curriculum</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty/Administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty with social services experiences</li> <li>• Willingness to build partnership with LCFS</li> <li>• Experience with building employer partnerships (i.e. apprenticeships)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant faculty CV's and information</li> <li>• Statement expressing commitment to build partnership</li> <li>• Examples of similar partnerships with employers</li> </ul>
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net cost of credential / degree</li> <li>• School's ability to leverage funding to support students in pipeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of certificate</li> <li>• Number of scholarships and the average amount provided to students in the relevant programs</li> </ul>
<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of applicants</li> <li>• Number of accepted applicants</li> <li>• Student-faculty ratio</li> <li>• Average time to completion</li> <li>• Employment rates in relevant fields after graduation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data regarding applications, enrolled students, student-faculty ratios, persistence, and employment rates</li> <li>• Examples of areas of employment for recent grads</li> <li>• Examples of companies and organizations where graduates are employed</li> </ul>

## Next Steps

### Selection Process

Potential education partners should submit their response to Jill Armington, Director of Consulting at Ascend Indiana ([jill.armington@ascendindiana.com](mailto:jill.armington@ascendindiana.com)) by **August 5, 2019**. Once responses have been received, Ascend will schedule a meeting with LCFS and the interested party to review their candidacy. After Ascend and LCFS review potential education partners, LCFS will select the partner that best suits the needs of the YSS pipeline. The selected education provider will then meet with LCFS to align on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to move forward with the partnership. The selection process will be completed by **September 2019**.



Once the MOU is signed, LCFS and the education partner will enter a planning phase to develop the program content, which will take approximately five months beginning in October 2019. Ascend commits to planning and creating materials for meetings, thought partnership in program design, as well as project management. LCFS and the education provider can expect to commit significant staff time to gathering data, attending planning meetings, securing internal investment and approval, and preparing for program launch. LCFS is eager to begin developing the talent pipeline as soon as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to review this document. If there are any questions regarding the RFI, please reach out to Jill Armington ([jill.armington@ascendindiana.com](mailto:jill.armington@ascendindiana.com)).