

**DETERMINATION AND FINDING
FOR A SOURCE PROCUREMENT**

AGENCY: District of Columbia Public Schools
Office of the Deputy Chancellors
CAPTION: Social-Emotional Training and Support Organization
PROPOSED CONTRACTOR: Turnaround for Children
CONTRACT NO. GAGA-2018-C-0023

FINDINGS

1. AUTHORIZATION:

D.C. Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR, Section 1304 and 1702.

2. MINIMUM NEED:

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Office of School Design and Continuous Improvement (SDCI) has an immediate need to procure the services of Turnaround for Children to support schools and the District with infusing neuroscientific research and its learnings into all levels of an education system, helping schools create optimal conditions for learning so that rigorous instruction can take place, making achievement possible.

3. ESTIMATED COST:

The estimated cost is \$700,000.00 for the option year two period through September 30, 2020.

4. FACTS WHICH JUSTIFY A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT:

Turnaround for Children (Turnaround) envisions a day when all children in the United States will attend schools that prepare them for the lives that they choose. In pursuit of this vision, Turnaround translates neuroscientific research into tools and strategies for schools that serve multiple fields to better understand how children learn, and works to infuse those learnings into all levels of an education system.

Turnaround is uniquely qualified to deliver these services in the District of Columbia for three primary reasons:

- Resources rooted in the science of learning and development
- Strong history of success providing these services in the District
- Proven success through improvements in school climate and teacher practice

More detail regarding Turnaround’s unique qualifications can be found below.

Resources rooted in the science of learning and development

Research spanning multiple scientific disciplines paints a more dynamic and optimistic picture of human development than has ever existed before. Studies show that the expression of our genetic makeup is not fixed at birth; rather, our brain continuously develops from the moment

we are born, directly responding to the experiences, relationships and environments we encounter into adulthood. This neural ability to strengthen and grow creates a tremendous opportunity in the space of child development. By using these scientific insights, parents, educators and caretakers can ensure all children are equipped to reach their full potential.

But this neural malleability poses risks for children who regularly encounter adversity, such as youth of color, immigrants and those who live in poverty. Just as the body internalizes positive experiences, it also internalizes adverse ones through the biological mechanisms of stress. When confronted with stress, our bodies experience a surge of hormones that increase our heart rate, blood pressure, inflammatory response and blood sugar levels. While this “fight or flight” response makes us more vigilant and alert in the moment, it is dangerous when prolonged and unmitigated – overwhelming a child’s development and leaving our children at a higher risk for learning, behavior and health problems as they get older.

Youth spend a lot of their childhood and adolescence in school; therefore, school environments and experiences are incredibly important to their overall development. But many education systems are not designed with a fundamental understanding of this science and the opportunities and risks it presents for all students. For many children who regularly face adversity, these systems can have the opposite effect – perpetuating beliefs that race, culture, gender and/or economic status correlate with an innate inability to learn. These dangers are materialized in everything from discipline policies to an individual teacher’s language in the classroom. Such structures and policies add unneeded stress onto youth, and make it increasingly difficult to fully develop and succeed. Thus, an achievement gap that’s created before a child even begins school continues to widen as they matriculate through K-12.

As overwhelming as these challenges may seem, a solution lies in the science of learning and development. This science demonstrates that education systems can be designed to promote healthy development for all students while actively mitigating the negative impact of adversity on students who face it regularly. To fully capitalize on this opportunity, education models must integrate the science of learning and development into their systems, values and practices, with an intentional focus on promoting equity where it is not yet present. Turnaround specifically focuses on educators who serve high concentrations of students facing adversity, equipping them with the knowledge, resources and supports they need to mitigate this negative impact on learning and in doing so, promote equity for all young people as they grow.

Turnaround’s mission to implement change at all levels of an education system is ambitious, but truly unique in comparison to other education reform efforts. By using scientific research to influence the greater ecosystem in addition to individual schools, Turnaround’s approach is one of a kind, with promising potential for maximum impact.

Background and Success in the District

Over the past seven years, Turnaround has partnered with 12 schools, serving more than 400 school staff and 3,500 students through its traditional capacity. More recently, this partnership has expanded to include professional learning series for district-level staff – training more than 250 social workers and psychologists on foundational concepts regarding the science of adversity.

This mutually beneficial partnership between Turnaround and DCPS has created a proven track record of success, particularly in the areas of school climate and teacher practices. During the 2016-17 school year, Turnaround worked with four schools – all of which made promising strides towards creating healthy learning environments.

In each of its school partners, Turnaround takes a diagnose and prescribe approach to its school reform model, where each school receives an individualized intervention specifically designed to meet its unique needs. To develop these action plans, Turnaround collects baseline data using its internally-developed Schoolwide Environment Assessment Tool (SEAT). This tool provides a comprehensive snapshot of a school’s environment through quantitative and qualitative data collection, assessing both the existence and quality of the systems, practices and procedures in a school. Based upon the results of the collected baseline data, Turnaround co-creates school-specific goals for the year in collaboration with school leadership, and then tracks progress against these goals throughout the year.

District-level Support

As stated earlier, Turnaround expanded its relationship with DCPS beyond its traditional partnerships with individual schools to include broader, district-wide initiatives. This includes Turnaround’s membership in the DCPS School Climate Advisory Committee, as well as multiple trainings targeted at all levels of staff ranging from instructional superintendents to social workers and psychologists. Through one such training, Turnaround trained more than 250 DCPS social workers and psychologists on foundational concepts, such as how to incorporate a trauma lens in the classroom and how to use reminding and reinforcing language in instruction. 94% of participants reported that they would recommend the services to a colleague, with more than 25 schools requesting additional support from Turnaround through the end-of-year survey. Additionally, during the 2016-17 school year, Turnaround provided support to two instructional superintendents and their respective principal clusters. This work was well received and will be expanded to three clusters during the 2017-18 school year.

Market Analysis

Turnaround for Children’s (Turnaround) primary competitors fall into two categories: “full cocktail” consultants and “single element” organizations.

Full Cocktail Consultants

These organizations are the most aligned with Turnaround’s full scope of services. They are guided by a strong awareness of the impact of trauma and work on a school-level to address issues related to environment, mindsets and skills. Most of these providers work in 10 to 15 schools through multi-year engagements in specific regions, focusing on a range of school practices and systems with a specialization in integration and implementation.

- University of California, San Francisco, Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) project
- Washington State University, Collaborative Learning for Educational Achievement and Resilience (CLEAR) project
- Project ACHIEVE

These organizations have work areas that overlap with some components of Turnaround’s services, but do not provide the full, integrated set of services provided by Turnaround.

Single Element Organizations

Integrated Student Supports

These organizations focus on building multi-tiered systems of support, identifying students in need of tier II and III support and aligning them with interventions that meet their needs. These organizations often select and train additional staff members for the school to manage these systems and coordinate intervention programs. These organizations share a strong focus on high-poverty schools, but often focus on grades 6 through 12; some elementary models are known.

- Communities in Schools
- City Connects
- City Year

Trauma-informed Practice

These organizations focus on adversity and trauma, providing awareness and consultation to school systems and schools. These organizations typically staff licensed psychologists and counselors to ensure expertise in mental health care provision, but tend not to have specified practices for teachers and school leaders.

- Child Trauma Academy
- Sanctuary Institute

Social-Emotional Learning

These organizations center on student-focused programs that are dedicated to developing social-emotional skills and mindsets. Delivery models often include mandatory staff training and implementation support. Integration support regarding issues of schoolwide discipline, learning climate and academic topics are still in the early stages of development:

- Compassionate Schools
- Second Step
- PATHS

Teacher Practice

These organizations focus on teachers and their classroom practices, including discipline and classroom management. Their practices often speak directly to educators and include integration with core pedagogical strategies and/or rigorous academic content. While some focus on high-poverty schools, organizations in this area are typically more general.

- Responsive Classroom
- CT3 Education
- EL Education

The Office of School Design and Continuous Improvement believes that Turnaround for Children history working with DCPS, experience in school turnaround, and the suite of school climate services described above makes them uniquely qualified as a partner for our District and schools. Over the past five years, we have seen significant improvements in almost all core areas of school operations and have built a powerful, positive relationship with DC Public Schools.

In light of the ability for Turnaround for Children to provide all services discussed above versus multiple companies servicing our students, it appears a sole source award to Turnaround for

Children is in the best interest of the DCPS and would be the most efficient and cost-effective procurement method.

CERTIFICATION BY THE OFFICE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS:

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and the anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

Date

Office of the Deputy Chancellors

CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above certified findings in accordance cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1702.

Date

Candace Butler
Chief Procurement Officer