

## PROCUREMENT OFFICER'S DETERMINATION Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement COMAR 21.05.09.04

Department/Agency: Department of Human Services, Office of Technology for Human Services

Contract Term: 04/12/2023 -08/01/2026

Amount: Estimating \$1,000,000

Category: Information Technology

Contract Type: Fixed Price

Name and Address of Selected Contractor: To be determined by issuing an Invitation for Bids (IFB) to the National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (or NCPA) contract resellers identified with by NEC for Unaverage Blue Contract Center and IVR solution.

File or ID No.: SSA/HELPL-23-001 Adult Protective Services/Child Protective Services (APS/CPS) Helpline:

The Department of Human Services ("DHS") seeks to participate in an Intergovernmental Cooperative Purchasing Agreement (ICPA) utilizing National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA) a cooperative purchasing contract vehicle as the administrative agency for the procurement of an Adult Protective Services/Child Protective Services (APS/CPS) Helpline.

DHS is seeking to continue the implementation of a hosted NEC Univerge Blue Contact Center and IVR Solution to provide a centralized call center with a single 800 number to provide services for the APS/ CPS to report suspected abuse or neglect and access to other Adult and Child Welfare Services and delivery of these calls to DHS case workers. The Solution provides the following capabilities:

- Speech enabled menus.
- Select either CPS or APS
- Select the county of the suspected incident
- Route calls to the appropriate Case Worker based upon county location, CPS or APS, the time of day, and other conditions as set forth by DHS.
- Be compatible with both VoIP and legacy PBX systems.
- Be able to deliver calls to Cell or Smartphones.
- The Case Workers must be able to log on/login through a browser on their computer, iOS or Android device.
- In addition to the 800 number, be able to use the existing numbers that each of the 30 jurisdictions/offices have currently published.
- DHS will be able to control who is available to take calls and to track the calls into the Call Center.
- DHS will be able to see who called, when they called, and what case worker received the call.
- In the event that a case worker is logged in and misses the call, the Solution will take the call back and send it to another case worker.
- The supervisor will have visibility to see which case workers are logged in and available.

The scope of the current contract has its limitations lacking specificity in certain areas which came to light when the Hotline system experienced a service degradation in December of 2021. The new Scope addresses many of the "lessons learned" which now address clearer communication parameters for event notifications from the vendor to DHS, root cause analytics, data back-up plans, failover testing, etc.

Following the service degradation in December of 2021, an action plan was implemented by DHS with the vendor; however, many of the requests made by the vendor under the action plan were not specifically addressed in the current contract's Scope. Therefore, the Scope for the next contract is more comprehensively written to address those shortcomings.

It is ideal to continue to use NEC products because the APS/CPS Helpline is an ongoing technology solution effort which is supported by a current contract and modification with Prime Contractor, Newcastle Communications. The Hotline solution which was initially deployed (Touchpoint) is being replaced by an alternative solution known as Univerge Blue, an NEC product. Univerge Blue has been deployed in six (6) jurisdictions to date and will be viable statewide on or about August 17th. At that point, the State will have successfully transitioned from the current Touchpoint solution to Univerge Blue. Univerge Blue is a more robust product which offers domestic support, enhanced data reporting features and incorporates many of the enhancements addressed by the current contract's modification. DHS is looking to continue building and configurating the current solution that began three (3) years ago.

DHS has chosen this cooperative partnership over others evaluated primarily because of the requirement for NEC software that is compatible with DHS' current telecommunications technology and the number of vendors available to bid. There are currently three (3) Maryland firms that can provide this product and two (2) are confirmed to be on this ICPA. In total, this ICPA has thirteen (13) potential bidders that are authorized resellers of the NEC products.

There are anticipated financial savings to DHS because the initial installation of the product has been completed under the current contract. The compatible hardware components that were purchased under the current contract would mean that this new contract will continue to build on the configuration for optimal performance. In addition, from a technical perspective, DHS will save money by not having to retrain the staff on how to use the existing system as most user training was completed under the current contract. The ICPA will be competitively solicited to all thirteen (13) authorized resellers and will be award to the one deemed most advantageous to the State of Maryland.

In accordance with COMAR 21.05.09.04, the Procurement Officer, has determined that the use of this Intergovernmental Cooperative Purchasing Agreement will provide cost benefits to the State, will promote administrative efficiencies and promote intergovernmental cooperation. These ICPA Agreements are in the best interest of the State and are not intended as a means to evade the purposes set forth under COMAR 21.01.01.03.

Determination By:

Maria Cazabon Procurement Officer

Date: August 4, 2022

Approval By:

DGS Chief Procurement Officer

Date: August 8, 2022