

**Office of the Attorney General (OAG)  
Request for Applications (RFA) for the  
Access & Visitation Grant (Shared Parenting Program) Request for Applications  
(Applications Due Friday, June 3, 2016)**

The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan Vision Statement and Guiding Principles emphasize the importance of parents providing both financial *and emotional* support to their children. The OAG's Child Support Division (CSD) echoes this philosophical approach and highlights our support for the emotional connection between parents and their children through the OAG Shared Parenting Program. CSD will solicit applications for projects under the federal Access & Visitation Grant for the Shared Parenting Program beginning May 6, 2016.

Under 42 U.S.C. 669b, the federal government provides to states grants for Access and Visitation (A&V) programs. The grants may be used to establish and administer programs to support and facilitate noncustodial parents' access to and visitation with their children. Eligible activities include:

- Mediation
- Counseling
- Education
- Parenting plan development, and
- Visitation Enforcement.

**Applicable Funding Source:** The source of funding is through an appropriation by the Texas Legislature. All funding is contingent upon an appropriation to the OAG by the Texas Legislature. The OAG makes no commitment that an application, once submitted, or a grant, once funded, will receive subsequent funding.

**Eligibility Requirements:** Projects funded under this program do not have to be statewide (exception: Hotline and related projects must be statewide). State funds or other funding may be used to expand the federal Access & Visitation Program. Entities eligible for funding include: courts, local government or other public entities, and nonprofit organizations with a minimum of two years operating history. **Matching funds (cash or in-kind) of at least 10% are required.** Throughout the entity's public education materials, web and social media sites, and any media or public comments, the entity must demonstrate a consistent message of cooperative parenting without any bias toward either parent or set of parents. Organizations must have staff without prior convictions related to financial misconduct, fraud, or theft.

**Local Shared Parenting Program (SPP) Priorities**

**Preference will be given to those proposals emphasizing Texas' priorities for the SPP grant:** early intervention, co-parenting education; alternative dispute resolution services, and visitation enforcement programs offering parents with cases in the IV-D child support program legal, educational, and case management assistance in achieving compliance with parenting time (possession) orders. These priorities include a target population of forming families within the IV-D child support program. A forming family, also called a fragile family, consists of low-income, unmarried parents who share a child and are at high risk of family dissolution. Applicants are encouraged to discuss in detail the particular issues of never-married couples. Approximately 67% of the OAG caseload includes parents who were not married at the birth of their child. The Shared Parenting Program emphasizes mediation, co-parenting education, and resources to support cooperative parenting for never-married noncustodial parents and former partners with child support cases in the IV-D agency (OAG). Applicants should define how their proposals would reach underserved populations. Proposals must include methodology that will

be used to report outcomes of proposed services on noncustodial parenting time. Grantees are required to submit monthly demographic information on customers served.

### **Statewide Toll-Free Telephone Hotline Project**

In addition to local projects, the Office of the Attorney General is inviting proposals for one project to provide a statewide, toll-free, telephone hotline providing legal information on access and visitation, custody, paternity establishment, and child support as well as legal resources for parents, and a website with shared parenting information and legal resources. Hotline project applicants will need to demonstrate the ability to provide brief legal services to a minimum of 3,000 callers per month. Services must include:

- paper and electronic copies of legal resources to callers, host an internet website that provides parents with comprehensive access, visitation, custody, paternity and child support information;
- offer innovative services through social media and demonstrate how it will effectively educate and assist parents;
- off-site call center capability—not be restricted to being at one office
- accurate and appropriate referrals to local providers of shared parenting, mediation, and legal services;
- ability to provide comprehensive metrics in monthly report, including tracking customer satisfaction with hotline and web-based services;
- explanation of Texas' IV-D child support system and processes; and
- explanation and/or interpretation of child support and parenting time court order language in parent-friendly language to callers in multiple languages.
- **Preference given to applicants able to offer combination hotline and legal line services.**

### **How to Obtain Application Kit:**

The OAG will post the required Letter of Intent and Application packet on the OAG's website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/family-initiatives>. Updates and other helpful reminders about the application process will also be posted at this location. Potential applicants are encouraged to refer to the site regularly.

### **Deadlines and Filing Instructions for the Grant Application:**

Submission of a Letter of Intent is required prior to applying for this grant. If a Letter of Intent is not completed and submitted by the deadline, then an Application will not be accepted and is not eligible for funding. To obtain the Letter of Intent go to: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/family-initiatives>. Once submitted you may download the complete application packet.

**Applications must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. CST Friday, June 3, 2016.** Applications and/or attachments received after the deadline will not be considered. Applications may be submitted 1 of 2 ways. Do NOT use the US Postal Service. **This location CANNOT accept US Postal Service deliveries.**

#### **1. By Federal Express or by United Parcel Service (UPS):**

Office of the Attorney General  
Family Initiatives, Child Support Division  
5500 East Oltorf Street, Mail Code 039  
Austin, TX 78741

2. **By email to:**  
[OFI.Grants@texasattorneygeneral.gov](mailto:OFI.Grants@texasattorneygeneral.gov) ; cc: [deborah.arellano@texasattorneygeneral.gov](mailto:deborah.arellano@texasattorneygeneral.gov)
- A. Email your application as:
- a. Read only files (with electronic signature); **OR**
  - b. Single PDF file.

Include all attachments (FY17-FY18 budgets and performance indicators, support letters, and letter of cooperation with the local child support office (except Hotline applications)). **Contact** the *office manager at your local child support office* (Regional Manager if you serve many counties) for the letter of acknowledgment. Do not send your version to the office manager.

- B. Print your sent email and retain for your files as proof of timely submission.

**Minimum and Maximum Amounts of Funding Available:** The OAG anticipates awarding approximately 8-10 grants ranging from \$30,000 to \$100,000 per fiscal year for projects other than the Statewide Toll-Free Telephone Hotline Project. Funding levels for the Statewide Toll-Free Telephone Hotline Project will be at the OAG's discretion.

**Start Date and Length of Grant Contract Period:** Contract awards will be awarded by State Fiscal Year. The State Fiscal Year is from September 1 through August 31 of each year. The initial contract term will be from September 1, 2016 through August 31, 2017. After the initial contract term, Contractors successfully performing program services may be eligible for up to two additional one-year contract extensions, based on performance and availability of funds. contract extensions are at the sole discretion of the OAG, which reserves the right to add new federal or state mandates.

**Award Criteria:** The OAG will make funding decisions that support the efficient and effective use of public funds. Scoring components may include, but are not limited to: information provided by the applicant on the organization's capacity, infrastructure, current knowledge, efforts, expertise and experience, and on the proposed project activities and budget.

**OAG Contact Person:** Email questions about the application process to: Shared Parenting Coordinator at [deborah.arellano@texasattorneygeneral.gov](mailto:deborah.arellano@texasattorneygeneral.gov) or 512-460-6195 and check the Frequently Asked Questions on the OAG website for answers (posted within 10 business days).