

SERVICE SPECIFICATION ON HOTLINE AND OUTREACHING SERVICE TEAM

PURPOSE

1. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is inviting, through this Service Specification, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to submit an application for the operation of a Hotline and Outreaching Service Team (HOST). The service is planned for commencement of operation in October 2008. This service specification states the requirements and provisions for the operation of the HOST.

APPLICANT

2. The applicant NGO must be a bona fide non-profit making charitable institution or trust that is exempt from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance and is providing welfare services.

BACKGROUND

3. Since commencement of its operation in October 1980, the Hotline of SWD <2343 2255> has been serving as an important contact point for the public to have access to the services provided by the Department. Presently, social workers are available at specific time, i.e. 9:00 am to 10:00 pm (Monday to Saturday) and 1:00 pm to 10:00 pm (Sunday and Public Holiday) to provide counselling and advice to the callers in need of social work intervention, as well as information to the public. Public enquiries are also handled on a 24-hour basis in the form of pre-recorded message or facsimile transmission through the Interactive Voice Processing System (IVPS). A call transfer system between the SWD Hotline and the Family Crisis Support Centre (FCSC) of Caritas – Hong Kong / the CEASE Crisis Centre of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals is in operation on a time-limited basis. Under the call transfer system, callers dialing up the SWD Hotline outside the duty hours of the social workers mentioned above can either leave their message on the recording machine or press the designated button “0” to directly transfer their calls to the FCSC or the CEASE Crisis Centre for immediate assistance from social workers.

4. Following a review on the hotline service, SWD plans to strengthen the hotline service in order to provide timely assistance to the needy individuals and families, through the provision of round-the-clock counselling service. Noting that a large proportion of the calls handled by social workers of SWD Hotline request only service information instead of counselling service, SWD has procured the service from “1823 Integrated Call Centre” (ICC) of Efficiency Unit (EU) from February 2008 to handle those enquiry calls relating to social

security matters. With such service procurement, social workers of SWD Hotline are able to focus more in handling callers requiring social worker's intervention and the waiting time for callers to contact the social worker can be shortened. Moreover, with the planned operation of the HOST and upon its commencement of service, social workers of SWD will man the hotline from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm from Monday to Friday and 9:00 am to 12:00 noon on Saturday (excluding public holidays) in order to concentrate the staffing to handle calls in this time period. In other words, the HOST will provide hotline service to service users outside the aforesaid time period and provide outreaching service to specific groups of needy cases in case of emergency situations warranting immediate intervention by social worker.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

5. The followings are terms used in this Service Specification (the Specification) -

Service Users Refer to the callers of hotline <2343 2255>, designated lines for ICC and police referral line, including general public, professionals, public officers and other persons, who require service information or assistance, and regardless of their age, gender and race.

Operator Refers to the non-governmental organization (NGO) which is commissioned by the Director of Social Welfare to provide the services detailed in this Specification.

OPERATING HOURS

6. The Operator has to operate the HOST at the time periods mentioned below:

Monday to Friday: From 5:00 pm to 9:00 am of the following working day. The working day means a day from Monday to Saturday, excluding public holiday. (i.e. the HOST has to provide full day service during all public holidays)

Saturday to Sunday: From 12:00 noon of Saturday to 9:00 am of following Monday or working day, whichever the later, if Monday is a public holiday.

OBJECTIVES

7. The HOST aims at providing timely and effective intervention to the service users through the provision of phone counselling, immediate outreaching, referrals to appropriate service units for services, etc. to address problems arising from child care problems, marital discord, mental health, emotional problem, adjustment problems and other family and personal problem.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

8. The Operator should employ a team of registered social workers and supporting staff to handle all the calls to the hotline <2343 2255> during the operating hours as stated in paragraph 6. The HOST should adopt a coordinated approach with collaboration among different sectors and professionals concerned to handle service users requiring assistance and to link the needy individuals and families to various appropriate services available. The Operator has to collaborate with other service organizations including other subvented hotline service in accordance with the guidelines or protocol to be developed. SWD will work jointly with the Operator to establish a formal referral mechanism with concerned organizations in dealing with cases of various nature as appropriate and a protocol in handling complaints lodged by the callers. Its scope of services should include the following key components:

(a) Hotline Service

- (1) To provide immediate professional advice or counselling to the service users over phone;
- (2) To handle callers forwarded by ICC of EU requiring social work support;
- (3) To man the police referral line which is set up for police to refer cases in crisis intervention and in need of social work intervention;
- (4) To handle enquiries for service information, including those readily available in SWD website, from public or other professionals;
- (5) To make referrals to service units of SWD and NGOs, SWD after office hours outreaching teams, other government departments and other concerned parties as appropriate, if follow up intervention is required; and
- (6) To provide communication backup support to SWD after office hours outreaching teams as required in order to facilitate their delivery of immediate outreaching and crisis intervention.

(b) Outreaching Service

- (1) To perform outreaching duties in form of, but not limited to, on-site support and assessment, counselling, escort to hospital, delivery of food / warm clothing, etc. during the operating hours for all necessary cases except the followings:
 - (i) Cases involving suspected child abuse and spouse battering;
 - (ii) Cases involving psychiatric emergency;
 - (iii) Suicidal cases;
 - (iv) Sexual violence cases;
 - (v) Elder abuse cases;
 - (vi) Situations calling for specific statutory procedures to be handled only by a public officer, for example, a child requiring care or protection owing to the absence of parents or guardians; and
- (2) To make referrals to other service units if follow up is still required after the outreaching conducted by the HOST.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

9. Essential service requirements will include the followings:
 - (a) The Operator should provide an effective and reliable hotline system with the capacity of at least 10 physical lines for in-coming calls, at least 2 separate physical lines designated for calls forwarded by ICC of EU and at least 1 separate physical line for police referral line;
 - (b) The Operator should have an effective disaster recovery plan to recover the hotline system within 12 hours and a contingency plan to maintain the hotline service in case of the shut-down of the hotline system;
 - (c) The Operator should provide an effective and feasible staff deployment mechanism so as to ensure sufficient staffing to meet fluctuating number of incoming calls as well as outreaching requirements at any point of time;
 - (d) The calls requiring counselling service should be handled by registered social workers with a recognized degree or diploma in social work;
 - (e) The management of the HOST should be under the supervision and guidance of a registered social worker with a recognized degree in social work and not less than 5 years of experience in social work practice;

- (f) All the incoming calls should first be picked up by registered social workers with a recognized degree or diploma in social work for effective screening; and
- (g) The outreaching service should be performed by registered social workers with a recognized degree or diploma in social work at any point of time for professional assessment and intervention.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

10. The implementation schedule is as follows -

<u>Date</u>	<u>Task</u>
24 April 2008	Invitation of proposals
6 June 2008	Closing of submission of proposals
June 2008	Vetting of proposals
July 2008	Announcement of results
October 2008	Commencement of service

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

11. A vetting committee will be set up in SWD to assess the proposals. The assessment will be based on the quality aspects of the proposals including knowledge and relevant experience of the agency, reliability of hotline system, staffing arrangement, flexibility in meeting changing situations, coordination and interfacing strategies, implementation plan of the project, management support, value-added proposals, and other merits of the proposals. Details of information to be included in the proposal are at **Annex**. Applicants may be invited to present their proposals to the Vetting Committee if needed.

PROJECT DURATION

12. The HOST is a 3-year project, tentatively commencing from 1 October 2008 up to 30 September 2011.

FEE CHARGING

13. The Operator should provide the service to the service users free of charge.

PREMISES, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

14. The Operator is required to arrange an existing fitted out premises for the operation of the project. The Operator may apply for a minor Lotteries Fund grant (i.e. no more than \$0.4 million) for the necessary minor renovation.

If the Lotteries Fund grant is applied, the Operator should undertake to operate welfare services in the premises for at least 36 months. All requirements and procedures of the Lotteries Fund application should be referred to the relevant Chapters, particularly Chapter 5 of the Lotteries Fund Manual. A provision of rent & rates subsidy at welfare rate will be released separately on actual reimbursement basis. Moreover, subject to approval of Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee, SWD will notify the Operator of the Lotteries Fund allocation for purchase of the F&E items required for the service operation **(excluding those relating to the hotline system which should be covered by the lump sum grant as mentioned in paragraph 19).**

15. The Operator must maintain the premises, furniture, and equipment in a condition that provides a safe physical environment free from obstruction and fire risk for the protection of service users, staff and visitors.

HOTLINE SYSTEM

16. The Operator must provide a hotline system, which should be accepted by SWD, to interface with SWD Hotline system, so that all the calls made to SWD Hotline during the operating hours mentioned in paragraph 6 above will be transferred to the hotline system of the HOST. The hotline system of the HOST must meet the following minimum requirements:

- (a) The System shall have the capacity of at least 10 physical lines for in-coming calls, at least 2 separate physical lines designated for calls forwarded by ICC of EU and at least 1 separate line for police referral line;
- (b) A display system showing the number and the time of waiting calls;
- (c) The System shall be able to provide function of voice mail, to allow the callers leave their messages for operators to call back. The System shall be able to cater at least 100 voice mails each with minimum length of 1 minute. The System shall allow the Operator to check the number and the recording time of voice mails left in the voice box;
- (d) The System shall be able to detect call hang-up and release the telephone line within 5 seconds after a call is terminated, regardless of whether the termination is initiated by the caller or forcibly made by the System;
- (e) A device for supervisor to listen to the calls during the conversation between callers and workers for supervision and monitoring purpose;
- (f) At least 2 hours uninterruptible power supply (UPS) when normal power is cut off;
- (g) An off-site backup system to support the disaster recovery plan

to ensure the proper running of the system in any case of hardware or software failure or total system breakdown.

17. The Operator may make use of existing hotline system owned / operated by the agency, or through acquisition of service from the market, or a combination of both, for operating the hotline system. The applicant should demonstrate in the submitted proposal that the hotline system to be used for the HOST, either in the existing hotline system or in the service to be acquired from the market, does meet all the minimum requirements as stated in paragraph 16. The vetting committee may at its discretion conduct on-site inspection where necessary. In such connection, setting up of a completely new hotline system to be owned by the Operator is not acceptable.

18. The hotline system of the HOST should be in place by September 2008 (i.e. at least one month before actual roll out) for testing of interface with SWD's existing hotline system and ICC of EU before the commencement of service.

FUNDING

19. An annual contract sum of **\$4.82Mn** at 2007-08 price level will be allocated on a lump sum grant basis to the Operator to deliver the service. The lump sum has taken into account personal emoluments, including provident fund for employing registered social workers and supporting staff, all other charges (such as employee compensation insurance and public liability insurance) in operating the HOST, and all the expenses relating to the hotline system, its enhancement and maintenance. The Government will not accept any liabilities or financial implication arising from the project beyond the approved funding. The Operator has to observe the principles and rules as provided under the latest Lump Sum Grant Manual. In respect of the lump sum allocated, the Operator has to observe the following subvention arrangement principles -

- (a) for NGOs operating under Lump Sum Grant (LSG), the LSG new allocation will be incorporated in the overall LSG of the agency. Accordingly, the NGO will have to follow the guidelines set out in the latest LSG Manual and the LSG Circulars in force for the use of the LSG, the annual financial reporting and the assessment of surplus, etc.
- (b) for NGOs operating under conventional modes of subvention, the LSG new allocation will not be incorporated in the subventions of service units under these modes. The LSG new allocation should be used for providing the LSG services on a “stand alone” basis (but it may be incorporated in other

LSG allocations for covering the costs of the services allocated under LSG on a combined basis). In such case, the NGO will have to follow the guidelines set out in the latest LSG Manual and the LSG Circulars in force for the use of the LSG, the annual financial reporting, and the assessment of surplus, etc. Regarding those service units remaining under the conventional mode of subventions, the NGO will have to follow the guidelines set out in the Guide to Social Welfare Subventions.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT

20. Upon approval of the application and signing of a Funding and Service Agreement (FSA), payment will be made on quarterly basis. The contract sum will be adjusted annually according to the principle as stated in the latest LSG Manual, i.e. LSG will not be topped up in the course of the year except for supplementary provision required to effect annual pay adjustments to their staff in subvented units in line with the civil service pay adjustment, where these adjustments have not been factored into the LSG provided. The LSG will be adjusted annually in line with salary adjustment on the following basis -

Personal Emoluments	Civil Service Salary Adjustment
Other Charges	Government-wide Price Adjustment Factor

21. The Operator is responsible for operating an effective and sound financial management system, including budget planning, projection, accounting, internal control system and auditing. It should maintain books and records and supporting documents on income and expenditure relating to the project and make them available for inspection by the Government representative. The Operator shall submit annual financial report and statements audited by a certified accountant or a public accountant registered under the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap 50) in accordance with the requirements as stipulated in the latest Lump Sum Grant Manual.

CRISIS MANAGEMET AND CONTINGENCY PLAN

22. The Operator must develop operational guidelines for crisis management as well as a contingency plan to specify strategies for the continuation of service, and should ensure that the contingency plan can be activated at all time should the HOST encounter difficulties in providing the services as stipulated in this Specification. SWD should be informed as soon as possible when the contingency plan is activated and the alternative mode of service is provided.

23. Any back-up service provided must meet all requirements of this Specification. In this regard, no additional allowance or compensation in any form will be payable by SWD in implementing the contingency plan.

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENT

24. Upon expiry of the Agreement and in the event that a subsequent agreement is entered into with a new operator, the Operator should cooperate with SWD to ensure proper transfer of service to the succeeding operator.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Outputs/Outcomes

25. The Operator is required to achieve the following minimum levels of output and outcome standards:

Output Standards

(a) Hotline Service

<u>Output Standard</u>	<u>Output Indicator</u>	<u>Minimum Level</u>
1	The waiting time for the service users to get their calls answered by registered social workers should not exceed 30 seconds.	80% of the incoming calls
2	The return time for calls leaving voice mail should not exceed 15 minutes.	80% of the calls leaving voice mail

(b) Outreaching Service

<u>Output Standard</u>	<u>Output Indicator</u>	<u>Minimum Level</u>
3	The time required for the registered social worker to arrive at the scene for those cases requiring immediate outreaching should not exceed 60 minutes.	80% of the cases

Outcome Standards

(a) Hotline Service

<u>Outcome Standard</u>	<u>Outcome Indicator</u>	<u>Minimum Level</u>
1	Out of the total number of calls requiring counselling, the percentage of these calls with the service users having perceived improvement in the problem(s).	80%

(b) Outreaching Service

<u>Outcome Standard</u>	<u>Outcome Indicator</u>	<u>Minimum Level</u>
2	Out of the total number of cases with outreaching provided, the percentage of these cases with the service users having perceived improvement in the problem(s).	70%

26. The Operator is requested to propose tool for measurement of the outcome standards.

27. The Operator is requested to indicate additional output/outcome measures and the level of attainment they expect to achieve in their proposals, in particular objective/measurable outcome indicators showing the effectiveness of the hotline and outreaching service to assist the service users, for example, the minimum number of counselling calls handled simultaneously. The pledged additional output/outcome measures and level of attainment will form an integral part of the FSA.

Service Quality Standards

28. The Operator is required to meet the relevant requirements of the Service Quality Standards (SQSs) as announced by SWD.

CONTROL MECHANISM

29. The Operator is required to comply with the requirements as laid down in this Specification, the FSA, as well as the Operator's proposal and

supplementary information, if any, as agreed with SWD. Continuation of service for the next term will be subject to assessment on the need for the service and performance of the service operator. SWD reserves the right to reallocate the project.

30. Where there is any change to the performance standards within the agreement period, SWD will seek mutual agreement with the Operator and the Operator will be required to achieve new requirements in accordance with the agreed implementation schedule.

31. SWD reserves the right to apply the following monitoring methods:

(a) announced and unannounced visits at periodic intervals to examine in detail the performance of the Operator, such as actual achievement of outputs/outcomes, compliance with the ESRs, service quality and standard achieved or not achieved, area of concern/complaint and outcome, etc; and

(b) assessment of the implementation of SQSs.

32. The Operator is required to provide monthly statistics, which is submitted on quarterly basis, on the output/outcome requirements and those additional/new items pledged by the Operator, and other relevant information as required in a prescribed format and time frame. This form may be revised to incorporate changes in requirements as agreed between SWD and the welfare sector, or between SWD and the Operator as stipulated in paragraph 30.

33. The Operator is also required to submit to SWD financial report and audited account on an annual basis.

34. The Government reserves the right to suspend or terminate the agreement with the Operator before the expiry date should the Government finds the Operator unable to deliver the agreed level of service, or the continuation of service by the Operator would put the service users or public interest in jeopardy, in accordance with the evidence collected by the Department. The Operator is obliged to facilitate the transitional arrangement as required.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

35. Applicants are required to submit a proposal (not more than 20 A-4 pages for main content when the pages are formatted to: font size=12 + line spacing=1 + margins= 2.5 cm, and not more than 50 pages in total including attachments) together with the required documents as stated in **Annex** under

seal. Applicants should submit **5 hard copies and 1 soft copy of the proposal on or before 6 June 2008 (Friday) at 5:00 pm** to the following address **by hand**:

Family and Child Welfare Branch
(Attn : Miss Maria LAU)
Social Welfare Department
Room 721, Wu Chung House
213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai
Hong Kong

~ END~

*Family and Child Welfare Branch
Social Welfare Department
April 2008*

Information to be included in the proposal

Your proposal should give a clear and comprehensive picture on how you propose to deliver the services of the Hotline and Outreaching Service Team (the HOST) to meet the objectives and requirements as set out in the Service Specification. Additional information to fully illustrate the merits of your proposal and how you propose to measure the effectiveness is encouraged. The proposal must include the following information:

- (1) A brief listing of welfare services currently operating by the applicant;
- (2) capability and relevant experience in casework / counselling services, hotline service, crisis intervention services and / or on-line counselling to needy targets;
- (3) a detailed description of the service delivery proposal in meeting the service objectives, including
 - (i) knowledge about the categories and needs of the target service users to be served including general public and individuals and families experiencing distress requiring social worker intervention;
 - (ii) approaches and tools to be adopted in assessing and addressing various needs of the target service users;
 - (iii) concrete description on the services provided, including hotline service and outreaching service, and how they are delivered to meet the needs of different target groups and whether the proposed arrangements are feasible, reasonable and appropriate on the following aspects:

Hotline

- (a) description of whether the hotline system will be provided through acquisition of service from the market, or by making use of existing hotline system owned by the Operator, or a combination of both;
- (b) detailed description of the hotline system including, number of physical lines for in-coming calls and calls

forwarded by the Integrated Call Centre of Efficiency Unit, physical set up of the system, basic call features such as queue position, screening mechanism, voice mail, call transfer, call conference, remote control of insertion of special announcement, knowledge base, etc. to facilitate call handling and case referral, and the concrete measures for meeting the requirements as stated in paragraph 16 of the Service Specification;

- (c) if existing hotline system owned by the Operator is to be involved, additional information on full description of software and hardware configuration, number of years the equipment have been in use, the current maintenance plan, as well as security standards of server room are also required;
- (d) detailed description on the related cost on the provision of the system in full;
- (e) disaster recovery plan, e.g. availability of an off-site backup system, showing the feasibility to recover the hotline system within 12 hours in case of the shut-down of the hotline system;
- (f) if the hotline system is fully or partly provided through acquisition of service, confirmation documents from service provider with detailed description on information as required in (b), (d) & (e) are required;
- (g) concrete measures (e.g., checklist, etc) and tools to effectively assess the urgency and nature of in-coming calls to facilitate the efficient delivery of follow up intervention;
- (h) number and rank of staff on site to manage the operation of the hotline service; as well as concrete measure(s), including the staff deployment mechanism or off-site support mechanism, to ensure delivery of hotline services to meet fluctuated needs for incoming calls for counselling service at any point of time (including minimum no of calls to be handled by registered social worker (RSW) simultaneously, defining the peak or non-peak hours of hotline service and the staffing arrangement during different time slots, the incoming calls should be first be picked up by the RSWs and the calls requiring counselling service

should be handled by RSWs);

- (i) mechanism in managing the clientele records of hotline service;

Outreaching service

- (a) concrete measures and tools to be adopted to decide whether immediate outreaching to individual calls is required;
- (b) concrete, feasible and effective staff deployment mechanism to ensure sufficient staff to deliver immediate outreaching even to a large number of cases by RSWs at the same time;
- (c) concrete measures to ensure the social worker to arrive at the scene for those cases requiring immediate outreaching service not exceeding 60 minutes;
- (d) concrete measures to ensure the safety of social workers and clients when performing outreaching service;
- (e) effective recording systems to manage the clientele records of outreaching service;

- (iv) Contingency plan: formulation of contingency plans, including strategies for the continuation of service and measure(s) to ensure that the contingency plan can be activated at all time should the HOST encounter difficulties in providing the services e.g. disruption of electricity supply, unexpected upsurge of calls / outreaching cases, etc.. Such plan must meet all requirements of the Service Specification.

- (4) proposed output and outcome indicators, the respective level of attainment and means of measuring these indicators;
- (5) description of the quality assurance measures and mechanism (e.g. service manual, guidelines, review system, records, regular meeting, etc.), including the approach / means and details of how they will be implemented in order to monitor and evaluate the service delivery, and the validity and practicability of the proposed measures;
- (6) details on staffing arrangements, including the HOST should be under the supervision and guidance of a registered social worker with a recognized degree in social work as well as 5 years of

experience in social work practice, minimum number of RSW(s) on duty at any point of time, staffing structure of the HOST (including rank / qualification and number of staff, and an organization chart), the roles and responsibilities of individual staff; and an overall description on staffing arrangement (including the notional duty roster illustrating how you mobilize manpower and maintain your proposed minimum number of RSW(s) on duty at any point of time) to ensure smooth operation of the HOST; management and back-up support of the agency provided for the HOST, etc;

- (7) description on provision of training and staff development programmes for staff of the HOST, including orientation schedule, in-service training, supervision and monitoring, and whether the proposed programmes are relevant and adequate to equip staff with knowledge and skills;
- (8) implementation schedule and detailed arrangement of the commencement of service;
- (9) detailed description on the availability of premises for delivery of non-premises-tied service e.g. shared office with other units, hire of hotline service, temporary office, etc;
- (10) details on the planned budget by year and the financial management system (e.g. budget planning, projection, accounting, internal control system, auditing, etc) for the HOST; and
- (11) concrete description on innovative and value-added services, and synergy with the agency's other services which are need-driven and geared to achieving the objectives of the HOST, if any.

END