

# Hartford Public Schools Independent Monitor Overview

## SCOPE

### I. Overview and Background:

In February of 2017, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) released an investigative report of Hartford Public Schools' (HPS) compliance with state laws regarding mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect both as defined by state law, as well as compliance with federal Title IX obligations. At its February 21, 2017 regular meeting, the Board of Education for Hartford Public Schools approved an *Action Plan in Response to the Report of the Child Advocate*. This Action Plan outlines nine areas of concern flagged in the report, along with corresponding action steps to address each concern.

One of these concerns is around Hartford Public Schools' capacity to implement and monitor the actions outlined in the plan: *Concern # 8: The Hartford Public Schools may currently lack the internal capacity to implement and monitor this action plan*. In addition to securing support from a number of outside entities that are experts in the fields of education, student safety, protections for students with disabilities and Title IX compliance, the action plan also calls for the district to secure an Independent Monitor to oversee the implementation of the action plan. The Independent Monitor will hold Hartford Public Schools accountable for changing practices and procedures to assure that all students are safe in our schools, with special regard for the most vulnerable students who have special needs. This monitor will oversee progress in implementing the Action Plan and will provide periodic public progress reports to the Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families and to our families and community partners.

Hartford Public Schools has already begun implementation of the majority of the work that is outlined in the Action Plan. The long-term goal of the district is to move beyond perfunctory compliance with the required action steps to transform the culture of Hartford Public Schools to one which ensures that student safety is the foundation of its work. We believe that we will maximize student learning and success only when we can build positive, trusting relationships with students and families and with one another.

To accomplish these goals, Hartford Public Schools seeks an independent monitor who will:

- Provide a review and monitoring of the systems, structures, processes and protocols to address each area of concern noted in the HPS OCA Action Plan.
- Offer an independent, external perspective on the systems change work Hartford Public Schools is engaged in;
- Offer guidance around strategies for moving from compliance to culture change;
- Provide a dependable, consistent source of information and assurance to our community that we are faithfully engaged in improving our student safety systems;

- Ensure that sustainability of systems is attended to so that at the close of the independent monitoring relationship, Hartford Public Schools and the community can have confidence that similar issues will not arise in the future.

**Responsibilities:**

The Independent Monitor, with the support of a Monitoring Advisory Group<sup>1</sup>, will:

- Ensure the implementation of required corrective actions indicated in the 2017 [Report from the Office of the Child Advocate](#) and noted in the [Action Plan in Response to the Office of the Child Advocate’s Findings and Recommendations](#);
- Support the HPS internal team in developing systems that ensure problem areas are monitored, addressed, and resolved;
- Support the HPS internal team in creating the culture shift necessary to ensure student safety at all levels (staff, school, central office, board) within the Hartford Public Schools;
- Monitor newly developed systems for accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability;
- Report to the families, staff, board and community of Hartford Public Schools as well as the State Department of Education, the City of Hartford and DCF on progress made on the implementation of the Action Plan and related culture change.

**II. Qualifications:**

Qualified individual or organizational applicants will:

- Come from any of a number of professional backgrounds, such as: child protective services, education, higher education, working with children with disabilities, health care, etc;
- Have experience with systems change and organizational reforms;
- Have the flexibility of scheduling to accommodate the work as it unfolds, within the parameters of the contract;
- Be adept in working in a collaborative and dynamic, multi-organizational environment;
- Have experience working in a culturally diverse environment and be comfortable using a culturally responsive practice approach;

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<sup>1</sup> The Monitoring Advisory Group will support the implementation and progress tracking of the HPS Action Plan and will be comprised of HPS representation including the Superintendent, the Office of the Child Advocate, a State Department Board of Education, HPS Board of Education, Mayor’s Office representation and a family/community advocate.

- Be available for a period of two years with a review after year one and the possibility of a continued engagement after two years pending annual reviews and mutual agreement;
- Have no real or apparent conflict of interest in relation to the Hartford Board of Education, the City of Hartford, DCF, or the State of Connecticut.

### **III. Timeframe:**

The Independent Monitor will be determined by June 30, 2017 or earlier and will be expected to commit to a two-year engagement, working an average of fifteen hours per week, though this may range in relation to the requirements of the work and availability of the monitor. The role and function of the Independent Monitor will be assessed after the first year for extension to the second year, with or without adjustments to the contract, depending on progress made at the district level and mutual assessment of the effectiveness of the relationship between the district and the Independent Monitor. While the current timeframe is two years with a review after year one, there is the possibility of a continued engagement after two years pending annual reviews and mutual agreement.

### **IV. Key Activities:**

- a. Develop Outcome Measures.
- b. Develop an approach for monitoring the implementation of HPS Action Plan including engagement of Monitoring Advisory Group and the HPS Internal Team as well as the use of monitoring frameworks/tools.
- c. Advise on and support the HPS Internal team in implementation of the HPS Action Plan as well as identifying how to systemize processes and procedures as standardized practices in the district.
- d. Advise, support and build internal capacity to create the cultural changes necessary to ensure ongoing compliance and a commitment to student safety at all levels (staff, school, central office, board)
- e. Develop plan for community outreach and the delivery of progress reports as indicated in Section V.
- f. Develop format and produce quarterly written reports that are accessible for multiple and diverse stakeholder groups. Reports must be translated into Spanish (and included in the project budget).

### **V. Deliverables:**

Quarterly written reports outlining HPS progress in all nine areas of the Action Plan will be delivered to the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education, the State Department of

Education, the City of Hartford and the Department of Children and Families. These reports will also be posted on the HPS website for families and community partners to access. Reports will be submitted on: October 15, 2017, and January 15, April 15, and July 15, 2018. Quarterly reports will include the following data points:

- A description of the systems, structures, processes and protocols implemented to address each area of concern. These may include meeting protocols, new processes and procedures, external reviews, superintendent and board reviews.
- An assessment of the efficacy of electronic monitoring system being launched by Hartford Public Schools to monitor safety concerns.
- An assessment of protocols within the Office of Talent Management to ensure ongoing training of staff, proper and timely response to performance concerns related to student safety and proper follow-up, ongoing monitoring and/or other resolution of staffing concerns.
- An assessment of protocols within the Special Education Department to ensure student safety measures are being followed and where concerns are raised, that they are monitored and satisfactorily addressed in a timely manner.
- A recommendation for concern areas requiring additional attention and gaps in policies, protocols and procedures to be addressed.
- Development of a permanent structure/protocol for ensuring compliance once the monitor's role has ended and any costs required for ensuring the ongoing implementation of such.

#### **VI. Access to Information:**

The Independent Monitor will have free and unfettered access to all employees of Hartford Public Schools for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of the HPS OCA Action Plan. This includes central office as well as school-based personnel. The district will also facilitate connections with contracted providers and community members working in both official and informal capacities. Interactions may include individual interviews that do not interfere with the delivery of instruction as well as trainings, staff meetings, and family and community events. The monitor will also have access to all relevant information and databases, including, but not limited to: Power School, Office of Talent Management records including disciplinary actions, DCF 136 forms, substantiation/non-substantiation notices, program concern letters, Title IX complaints, education records and incident reports. The monitor will also help inform the phased implementation of an electronic incident management protocol monitoring system to be launched in Spring, 2017. In order to ensure student privacy and comply with labor laws, the monitor will be required to enter into a confidentiality agreement with the district.

#### **VII. Reporting Structure:**

The Independent Monitor will have a multi-leveled reporting structure. For day-to-day support and access to staff and needed information, the monitor will work with the Superintendent of Schools or her designee. Quarterly reporting of progress will occur simultaneously to multiple organizations outlined in Section IV to ensure transparency and accountability of the work and fidelity to the independent nature of the role.

Interested parties should submit brief proposals to Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent of Schools, Hartford Public Schools at: [torrl001@hartfordschools.org](mailto:torrl001@hartfordschools.org).

Proposals to include:

1. Background and Qualifications: describe professional experience in leading similar projects and/or skill set that support the expectations of the Independent Monitor role.
2. Approach / Scope of Services: delineate the approach you would take to respond to the needs identified in this overview, the key activities and deliverables.
3. Budget and Fees: Must include all costs associated with the Independent Monitoring services including any fees (e.g. for translating reports into Spanish). This is a not-to-exceed budget.
4. Subcontracting: Must outline any additional staff necessary to complete the Independent Monitor's work to include role, purpose and cost.
5. References: Please provide at least three (3) current references.

#### **TIMELINE**

RFP Issued	June 9, 2017
Deadline for Questions	June 16, 2017
Questions Answered and Distributed	June 21, 2017
Proposals Due	June 30, 2017
Review and Create Short List by	July 7, 2017
Interviews	Week of July 10, 2017
Board Vote to approve recommendation	July 18, 2017
Commencement of Services	July 31, 2017