

ISSUED BY THE IOWA MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CONTRACT FOR LOBBYIST SERVICES

October 2019



Request for Proposal (RFP) for State Legislative Lobbyist Services For the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association

The Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association (IMHCA) is issuing a Request for Proposals as we explore our options for contracting with a lobbyist to assist us during the 2020 Iowa legislative session.

Who We Are

According to the American Mental Health Counseling Association (1986), the practice of clinical mental health counseling includes, but is not limited to, diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders, the use of evidenced-based, psych-educational techniques aimed at the prevention of mental and emotional disorders, consultations to individuals, couples, groups, families, organizations and communities, and clinical research into more effective psychotherapeutic treatment modalities. As an independently-affiliated state chapter of AMHCA, IMHCA currently serves over 350 members and is not only the largest, but the **ONLY** organization dedicated *exclusively* to meeting the professional needs of clinical mental health counselors in Iowa. For the past 20 years IMHCA has worked to promote quality mental health services for all Iowans, help define and distinguish the identity of the profession, and do our part to influence public policy in an effort to maintain standards of care and opportunities in line with our professional ethics and values. We accomplish these goals by working with other professional organizations, the state legislature, state regulatory agencies, colleagues, and clients alike to promote the role of mental health counselors in Iowa's mental health delivery system and enhance the overall quality of mental health counseling practices.

What We Do

IMHCA's primary activity centers around offering educational opportunities to counselors seeking to update and enhance their competencies, while providing a public forum and network throughout Iowa for counselors to address the social and emotional needs of their clients. We take great pride in these efforts, which also include promoting high standards of professional commitment to persons who seek mental health counseling services in Iowa, increasing awareness of the role and function of mental health counseling and counseling services to the public, supporting research into mental health concerns, counseling interventions, and their effectiveness, and promoting attainable licensure and certification for counselors at the state and national levels. Please visit www.imhca.net for more information about our work.

Scope of Services

There are currently several different legislative efforts underway for reforming Iowa's mental health care delivery system. The newly passed children's mental health reform bill, the mental health workforce shortage, restricted access to services by the managed care organizations contracted to provide Medicaid services to thousands of Iowans, an ever-growing substance abuse and opioid addiction problem in all 99 counties, and a desperate lack of funding to support Iowa's mental health system and many incentive programs (loan-forgiveness for mental health providers being one), are just some of the issues that top our membership's list of concerns.

There are dozens of bills and budget items introduced each year dealing with mental illness, mental health care, and other policy issues that IMHCA is concerned about. Our Association is engaged in these and many other initiatives through board and volunteer leadership, and board leaders want to ensure that our perspectives continue to be reflected during the upcoming legislative session.

Under the direction of the Executive and Public Policy Committee who work in concert with the Board of Directors, affiliates, and members in determining IMHCA's policy platform and priorities, the association seeks to retain the services of a lobbyist to work with the Public Policy Committee to address matters in which professional assistance before the Iowa State Legislature, individual State Legislators, the Governor's office,



and other state agencies is needed. This position would report directly to the Public Policy Committee Chair(s), with additional guidance and/or oversight from either the board President or another authorized member of the Executive Committee.

Preferred candidates will have a working knowledge and understanding of the experiences, problems, needs, and concerns of mental health counselors, the types of clients we serve, and as a deep understanding of how the professional duties and scope of practice for mental health counselors in Iowa differ from other helping professions. Excellent written and oral communication skills, a clear understanding of the legislative process, sound knowledge of human services, provider education, and mental health policy as well as the critical role mental health clinicians play in Iowa is also expected. Ideal candidates will also present with a proven track record of successful lobbying on behalf of nonprofits and/or member associations in Iowa and will possess the required knowledge and passion to serve as the driving legislative force and primary public policy resource for IMHCA representatives and the members we serve.

Conflicts of Interest

Upon award of the contract, in the event the Contractor becomes aware of any conflicts or potential conflicts between the interest of IMHCA and the interests of clients of the Contractor, the Contractor shall immediately notify IMHCA in writing of such conflict and/or include a description of the conflict(s) in the proposal. Written notice may be in the form of an email notification. In the event IMHCA becomes aware of any conflicts or potential conflicts between the interest of IMHCA and the interests of clients of the Contractor, IMHCA shall promptly notify the Contractor of such conflict. IMHCA and the Contractor shall attempt to resolve any such conflict in a manner mutually acceptable to both parties. If the conflict cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of IMHCA, IMHCA reserves the right to procure these items/services from other vendors with an appropriate reduction to the Contractor's fee(s).

Services to Be Performed

The lobbying contract would run approximately from December 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 with possibility for renewal for FY20-21 (7/1/20 – 6/30/21). On behalf of the association and our members, state lobbying services will include, but are not limited to:

1. Educating stakeholders, lawmakers/staff, cabinet members, coalitions, alliance groups, etc. on:
 - the critical role mental health counselors play in Iowa's mental health delivery system
 - how the professional duties and scope of practice for LMHC's differs from other helping professions
 - the experiences, problems, needs, and concerns of/faced by Iowa LMHCs
 - the benefit of aligning state policies and efforts with efforts taking place at the federal level (provider identity, portability and Medicare reimbursement primarily)
2. Attending and monitoring:
 - state legislative committee hearings and meetings
 - rulemaking proceedings
 - other administrative or legislative agency meetings
3. Educating and providing written and verbal testimony to lawmakers when necessary
4. Arranging and/or attending meetings with relevant and newly elected lawmakers/staff and stakeholders
5. Acting as liaison on any matters falling under the scope of this RFP or deemed important to IMHCA and
 - all branches, departments, and agencies of state government
 - all Congressional members and staff
 - all meeting or meetings with the Governor, Cabinet, Cabinet member, or state agency
6. Monitoring and assisting with the analysis of legislation and budget items of interest to IMHCA
7. Advising the association on all relevant legislative matters before, during, and after the session and 9. providing relevant information and feedback to guide the association's "best course of action" on public policy issues and proposed legislation



Successful candidates will prove equipped to meet these expectations through the following activities:

➤ **Advocacy**

- Support the organization with a strong presence in the Capitol as the “eyes and ears” of IMHCA and serving as day-to-day contact for legislators and other lobbyists on behalf of the association;
- Work to achieve IMHCA goals on legislation, issues or rules by lobbying members of the Legislature, legislative staff and state government officials;
- Track and attend committee and rulemaking hearings, coordinate and assist in the preparation of testimony, submissions, and in-person testimony on matters directly pertaining to the association’s agenda and interests;
- Attend and participate in interim hearings and meetings regarding issues important to IMHCA

➤ **Strategy**

- Assist the association in the development and implementation of its legislative agenda, key proposals and policy positions in partnership with the board and any identified affiliate network or organization;
- Identify as part of that strategy effective tools for educating and informing key parties on the critical role LMHCs must play in all developing strategies at the state level to tackle Iowa’s mental health crisis, including but not limited to educating those parties on scope of practice and the ways in which LMHCs differ from other helping professions;
- In collaboration with IMHCA’s Public Policy Chair(s), propose an annual strategic advocacy and political engagement plan (designed to achieve legislative goals, support business objectives, establish a plan for off session activities)

➤ **Tracking and reporting**

- Identify, track and report on state legislation and legislative proposals, bills, or action-items that may have an impact on IMHCA, its members, and/or its interests;
- Promptly notify IMHCA reps. of all proposed action and/or bills pertaining to IMHCA interests, along with available information on when the action is to be reviewed by committee;
- Provide timely recommendations and guidance on any legislative matter that may warrant the issuing of an IMHCA call to action;
- Report activities at a minimum through the following:
 - Telephone or weekly updates with at least one public policy committee members on pending issues as they arise;
 - A brief weekly written status report during the Legislative Session to be distributed electronically to IMHCA members stakeholders;
 - A final written report to be distributed electronically to IMHCA members and stakeholder

➤ **Relationship building**

- Assist in the development of relationships between IMHCA and key legislators, regulatory agencies, state agencies, local governments, and community organizations consistent with the annual strategic advocacy and political engagement plan;
- Arrange meetings prior to or at the start of each legislative session with newly elected officials in an effort to educate, inform, and strengthen relationships with key committee members and lawmakers;
- Develop strong connections with other agencies and state membership organizations to support mutual goals, including the board member(s) responsible for managing the administration of the contract in addition to those tasked with overseeing the association’s membership, networking and communication efforts, and all authorized representatives lobbying on the agency’s behalf



➤ Special events

When possible, the association's annual calendar, including all meeting dates and schedule of events shall be adopted in the first meeting of each fiscal year. A minimum of 30 days' notice will be given when attendance is requested at any IMHCA sponsored event and/or meeting. Whenever possible, photos of non-IMHCA sponsored events should be provided to IMHCA contacts for distribution to our members and for use on the association's website and social media pages.

- IMHCA's annual "Day on the Hill"
 - Advise and assist in the development of the "IMHCA Public Policy and Advocacy Toolkit" designed to help prepare members and volunteers for the association's annual "Day on the Hill"
 - Offer insight and assistance in the planning, organization, and execution of the association's annual "Day on the Hill"
- IMHCA's annual conference
 - In-person presentation of the session's final report at the association's annual conference
 - Participation in a public policy workshop designed to inform, guide, encourage engagement, and give members a voice in planning of the association's legislative efforts, in addition to aiding in the establishment of the association's agenda for the next session
- Regular meetings
 - Present annual strategic advocacy and political engagement plan proposal during a minimum of (1) regular meeting at the discretion of the association's board of directors, with IMHCA reserving the right to request additional in-person meetings if needed to successfully meet the terms herein
- Bill signing(s)
 - In-person attendance at all bill signings pertaining to legislation or action deemed important to IMHCA's efforts and/or mission, agenda, etc.

Your Response to This Request for Proposal

In responding to this request, we request the following information:

1. Letter of interest or narrative statement describing the qualifications of the lobbyist/firm;
2. Detailed description of how your firm would accomplish the requested services;
3. Expectations and requirements of our association in working with you;
4. Names of individual(s) who will be working on the project and their delegated areas of responsibility;
5. Experience and qualifications of above staff specific to their capacity to perform the functions outlined;
6. Complete list of current clients and those served in the preceding twelve months of proposal submission;
7. Examples of successes achieved with at least 3 clients for whom you successfully lobbied for in the past;
8. Proposed fee structure for lobbying services (see fee proposal note below);
9. Any additional information believed to be helpful to the board in awarding the contract as outlined;
10. Two references with email and phone contact information

Please note: IMHCA prefers the respondent(s) offer their fee as a firm, fixed fee schedule which includes all expenses including travel for the services outlined in this RFP. The association acknowledges that work outside the scope of this RFP (i.e. passing/drafting IMHCA-driven legislation, etc.) may require a special contract that resulting in additional fees that will depend on the scope of that agreed upon task. Any work that does not fall within the scope of this RFP and would result in additional fees must be approved by the Executive Committee prior to the initiation of that work/project to guarantee payment.



Evaluation of Proposals

IMHCA will evaluate proposals on a qualitative basis. This includes our review of the responses to the requested information, cost effectiveness of the proposal, and results of discussions with other clients and members of the association’s board of directors in accordance with best practice standards and guidelines.

Submission Instructions and Schedule

Activity	Date	Time
RFP Released	10/24/19	
RFP Questions Due	11/01/19	5:00 PM CST
RFP Answers Released*	11/04/19	5:00 PM CST
Proposals Due	11/11/19	11:59 PM CST
Interviews Scheduled**	11/18/19 – 11/22/19	TBD
Contract Execution**	12/01/19	

**Answers will be released on an ongoing basis through the designated date and time. Respondents are encouraged to submit questions as early as possible in the RFP process. Questions must be emailed and will not be answered verbally by phone or in person.*

***Target dates only – May be subject to change; interviews held only if deemed necessary.*

Please keep proposals to no more than 10 pages. Interested parties must submit all questions via email only no later than the established deadline. An electronic PDF version of the proposal must be submitted via email prior to the deadline for consideration. **To guarantee your proposal’s inclusion in the review process, the email subject line on all submitted proposals should read: “Urgent! IMHCA Contract Lobbyist Proposal”.** A confirmation of receipt will be returned via email following your submittal of the proposal.

If you do not receive this confirmation within 24 hours of submittal, please contact the association immediately at 515-490-2407.

Proposals must be emailed to:

Kacey Peterson
IMHCA Past-President
IMHCApastpresident@gmail.com

Any proposal received after the **11:59 PM deadline on November 11, 2019** will not be considered. Please direct any questions or concerns regarding this RFP to IMHCApastpresident@gmail.com.