

Executive Summary

DHS IDEAS DENVER START CONTRACT 2025-2027

Summary

The DHS IDEAS program requests City Council approval to engage in a professional service [contract with Rocky Mountain Human Services \(RMHS\), to administer START program services for Denver residents](#), ages 6 and up, with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and mental health needs (IDD-MH).

Funds are already appropriated and available in the IDEAS program budget.

Contract Overview

RMHS Denver START Program

	Contract
Term Length	2.5 years
Term Dates	7/1/2025 – 12/31/2027
Maximum Budget	\$6,420,399

Background - Denver START Program

[START](#) (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment) is a nationally recognized evidence-based, community crisis prevention and intervention service model for persons with IDD-MH that is overseen by the [University of New Hampshire's National Center for START Services](#) (UNH NCSS). Using a team approach, the Denver START program provides mental health assessment and 24-7 crisis response and stabilization services while optimizing independence, treatment, community living, and developing community capacity. The Denver START program was developed, through a competitive procurement process, in response to the 2018 [Needs Assessment for Residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#) and the 2019 [IDEAS Advisory Council](#) recommendations for the IDEAS Program to address gaps in adequate mental health services for people in Denver with IDD.

DHS's current competitively procured contract with RMHS was initiated on September 1, 2021, with the goal of developing and administering a pilot Denver START program, and having that program achieve UNH NCSS START certification. The current agreement is scheduled to terminate on June 30, 2025 (SOCSV-202475064-01; 202159285-01). DHS has negotiated a new contract with RMHS under a sole source, subsequent to RMHS' Denver START program obtaining NCSS certification in January 2025. At this present time, RMHS is the first and only START program certified to administer START services in

Colorado. Approval of this contract will provide ongoing support for the successful operation and continued growth of the Denver START program to support the needs of Denver's residents.

RMHS Denver START Program Outcomes to Date *(through March 2025)*

The development of the Denver START program has demonstrated strengthening our city's safety net for families with IDD, particularly when experiencing crisis related to mental health, with impacts in the following areas:

- Since the program's inception, the Denver START program has served a total of **193 persons (109 adults and 84 children)** with an **active enrollment population of 98** at the end of March 2025.
- **Consistent trends in the reduction of emergency service use.** The Denver START crisis line with 24/7 support has responded to **439 calls through March 2025**. Of the 439 crisis line contacts, **395 resulted in the person remaining in their community setting**.
- Culturally and linguistically competent services provided to diverse population of which a **majority of the people receiving services self-identified as a person of color (124 of 193)** and supports for people speaking a variety of languages including **Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, and American Sign Language**.
- Developed **26 institutional linkage agreements with community partners** to help enhance Denver's ability as a whole to meet the needs of this vulnerable population.
- Facilitated **50 community trainings** aimed at enhancing local capacity to support people with IDD/MH.
- Formed the **Denver START Advisory Council** and **hosted 12 Advisory Council meetings**, composed of key community stakeholders who are critical partners for program success and help support the establishment of institutional **18 linkage agreements** through their professional expertise in the community.

RMHS Denver START Program Status and Future

- **The RMHS Denver START program achieved certification from the UNH NCSS on January 28, 2025.**
- DHS is working with RMHS on a plan to support continued Denver START program growth including initiating research efforts in developing diversified funding sources.

Questions?

Please contact DHS IDDEAS Program Manager Michaela Hennig
(michaela.hennig@denvergov.org)