



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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TO: Jeff Irwin, Chair
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel
County Administrator

FROM: Dan Dwyer, Trial Court Administrator
Judah Garber, Friend of the Court

DATE: February 1, 2006

SUBJECT: 2006 State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) Access and
Visitation Grant

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

The Washtenaw County Trial Court-Family Division/ Friend of the Court is requesting that the Board of Commissioners ratify the signature of the County Administrator on an application to the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) for the Access and Visitation Grant and accept the grant award. The total grant request and award is \$23,000 for the period of October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006.

BACKGROUND:

The local non-profit social service agency, HelpSource, has been running a program in cooperation with the Trial Court domestic relations division for the past four years to supervise and facilitate parenting time in high conflict domestic relations cases. The Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program provides valuable services not otherwise available locally to the families in these cases, including, among others, supervision and monitoring of visitation and a neutral site for pick-up and drop off of children for visitation ("parenting time"). The program offers other services as well, such as mediation, counseling, development of parenting plans and guidelines for parenting time. Among other things, this program provides the only means for safe and regular access between the non-custodial parent and children in these difficult cases. Since its inception in 2001, the program has served 119 families.

The Washtenaw County Trial Court-Family Division/Friend of the Court provides no funds for the program but has applied for grant funding from the SCAO Access and Visitation grant program in each of the last five years to help fund the Supervised

Parenting/Exchange Program. These grant applications have not met with success until now, and HelpSource has had to rely on United Way and other funding sources as well as ever increasing fees to keep the program running. SCAO grant funding is typically awarded to new programs, not to ongoing successful ones such as this HelpSource initiative. The award this year is apparently in recognition of our effort to expand the program in innovative ways that would increase its value to customers, including the offer of therapeutic interventions during parenting time.

DISCUSSION

Per the 2006 Access and Visitation grant requirements, only applicants from Circuit Court/Friend of the Court offices were eligible for the grant funding. The Washtenaw County Trial Court/Friend of the Court grant application requested funding that will allow for the provision of new services and demonstration of new approaches (e.g., therapeutic interventions), while helping maintain program affordability to users by reducing the program's reliance on user fees as a revenue source. Fifty percent of the grant award will be used to implement therapeutic supervised parenting services to address psychological and emotional issues that may hinder the development of positive relationships between non-custodial parents and their children. The remaining 50% will provide financial support for existing services.

HelpSource estimates that approximately 80 children from a total of 50 families will be served during the 2005-2006 fiscal year. HelpSource has developed measures to evaluate the impact of the Supervised Parenting Exchange Program, which include reducing the amount of time a family spends in court, reducing the amount spent on attorney fees, reducing the level of conflict and improving communication between parents, and improving parental-child relationships. An internet-based database system implemented in the 2004-2005 fiscal year has enhanced HelpSource's evaluation capabilities and will allow outcome measurement tools to be refined further.

There is no apparent down side to this grant, other than its limited duration. There are no guarantees, but the SCAO typically continues these grants for more than one year in order to allow the new programs to become more firmly established. At the conclusion of the grant, the new programs, if successful, will require new funding sources for their continued operation.

IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:

None

IMPACT ON BUDGET:

The total budget request is \$23,000. The grant is a pass-through to the HelpSource Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program. The match requirement of 10% will be provided by HelpSource. The Trial Court will not provide any in-kind contributions to support this grant.

IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:

There is no impact on indirect costs.

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES

The grant will have a positive impact on HelpSource operations as it will allow that agency to offer more and better services through its successful supervised parenting time program.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:

This request conforms to the general County policies and procedures.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:

Resolution

Access and Visitation Grant Application

A RESOLUTION RATIFYING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S SIGNATURE ON A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE FOR THE 2006 ACCESS AND VISITATION GRANT FOR THE WASHTENAW COUNTY TRIAL COURT-FAMILY DIVISION/FRIEND OF THE COURT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$23,000; ACCEPTING THE GRANT AWARD; AMENDING THE BUDGET AND AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATOR TO SIGN THE DELEGATE CONTRACTS

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 1, 2006

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Trial Court-Family Division//Friend of the Court has applied to the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office for a grant in the amount of \$23,000 under their Access and Visitation grant program for the period of October 1, 2005 through September 31, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the grant funds will be passed through to HelpSource for the Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program which has been in operation since 2001; and

WHEREAS, the Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program offers services to families involved in high conflict divorce and/or custody disputes to allow a safe and neutral venue for the pick up and drop off of children for parenting time and supervision of parenting time by trained staff; and

WHEREAS, the grant funds will support existing services and allow for the expansion of existing services to include therapeutic supervision to promote positive relations between non-custodial parents and their children; and

WHEREAS, the Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program has gradually increased the number of families served each year it has been in operation; and

WHEREAS, approximately 80 children from 50 families involved in high conflict domestic relations cases will be served by the Supervised Parenting/Exchange Program during this the 2005-2006 fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, this matter has been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, the Finance Department, Human Resources, the County Administrator's office and the Ways and Means Committee.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby ratifies the signature of the Administrator on the application to the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office for an Access and Visitation grant in the amount of \$23,000 for the period October 1, 2005 through September 31, 2006 as on file with the County Clerk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners takes the following actions:

1. Accepts the grant award
2. Amends the budget, as attached hereto and made a part hereof
3. Authorizes the Chair of the Board or the County Administrator to sign the delegate contracts.

Friend of the Court
Access & Visitation Grant
2170051600

		<u>Original Budget</u>	<u>Revised Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
<u>Revenue</u>				
50000	Federal Revenue	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
	Other Revenues &			
67000	Reimbursements	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
	Total	\$0	\$23,000	\$23,000
<u>Expenditures</u>				
80000	Other Services & Charges	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$23,000</u>	<u>\$23,000</u>
	Total	\$0	\$23,000	\$23,000

Indirect Costs = \$0