



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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TO: Barbara Levin Bergman, Chair
Ways and Means Committee

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel
County Administrator

FROM: Kerry Sheldon
Administration

DATE: March 19, 2008

RE: Safe Havens – Supervised Visitation Grant

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

It is requested that the Board of Commissioners ratifies the signature of the County Administrator on the grant application to the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women for the Safe Havens – Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange program grant in the amount of \$400,000 for the period of October 1, 2008 through October 1, 2011.

BACKGROUND:

Following the closure of HelpSource Agency, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw (CSSW) assumed the Supervised Visitation program, which ensures a safe and comfortable atmosphere when children of domestic violence survivors undergo visitation and/or exchange between their parents. Washtenaw County is fortunate that these services were continued without disruption.

The United States Department of Justice (US DOJ) recently advertised a Request for Proposals that could provide a uniquely suitable funding stream to support and expand the Supervised Visitation program under CSSW's continued leadership. Because the US DOJ will only consider applications from a local unit of government that is working in partnership with a non-profit service delivery agency (or agencies), Catholic Social Services approached Washtenaw County to act as the applicant and fiduciary for the grant. The Washtenaw County Circuit Court, Friend of the Court, SafeHouse Center, have also stated their commitment to the project.

The mission of the Safe Havens Project is to coordinate a systematic response to all cases of Inter Personal Violence (IPV) and reduce the reoccurrence of domestic violence while providing a safe and comfortable atmosphere for visitation and exchange. Safe Havens will provide survivors and children of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, sexual assault or abuse and child abuse safe, affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate and age and activity appropriate supervised visitation and exchange services in Washtenaw County.

To achieve the mission, Catholic Social Services will:

1. Create a successful implementation phase, which will include: establishing a Steering Committee and Community Advisory Council (CAC); funding a project coordinator; conducting a community needs assessment; developing visitation center policies and protocols; developing a long term strategic plan for continuation of supervised visitation and exchange services; ensuring training of key community partners, CAC and Steering Committee; coordinating and collaborating with other organized efforts focused on ending domestic violence; ensuring supervised visitation and exchange services are regularly utilized in all cases of IPV; increasing outreach and marketing efforts to reach traditionally marginalized and underserved populations; increasing core community partners' collaboration and cooperation; and providing culturally appropriate supervised visitation and exchange services;
2. Implement changes deemed necessary from investigations during planning phase to provide services in alignment with best practice, and
3. Evaluate the project implementation in the final year of the project.

DISCUSSION:

The community of Washtenaw County has improved considerably over the past few decades with regard to the criminal justice and community response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse cases. These improvements have come through stronger local laws and ordinances, the implementation of coordinating boards, an increase in arrests for perpetrators, and a community supported millage to build a domestic violence shelter.

Progress aside, survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse cases have had to exchange their children with the offending parent in less than ideal places, such as in parking lots of local law enforcement or other public areas. In addition, domestic violence victims are often ordered to attend parenting classes with the offending parent, creating situations where abuse can be perpetuated.

A supervised visitation and exchange program has been in operation in our community since 2001. Because of the program's low visibility, there is a disconnect between the numbers of arrests we have seen for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse cases and the numbers who are utilizing the Supervised Visitation program. Funding for this project will enable increased utilization of this important service as well as develop the collaborative partners who can and should be using this as a community referral.

The funding of the Project Coordinator will facilitate the creation of a Steering Committee consisting of members from the County, local court, Friend of the Court, SafeHouse Center, and the Local Supervised Visitation Center (LSVC). This committee will arrange regularly scheduled meetings to address the need for collaborative efforts regarding effective supervised visitation and exchange services in cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse. In addition, roles of each of the community partners will be established to address how each partner will effectively address issues of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or abuse, stalking and child abuse in supervised visitation and exchange settings through the scope of their services.

The Steering Committee will establish formal affiliations with additional key community leaders from other organizations and agencies with expertise in child welfare, abuse and neglect, substance abuse, mental health, batterer intervention, family law and more through the creation of a Community Advisory Council (CAC) that will consult with the Steering Committee. In sum, the Steering Committee will seek to provide survivors and their children safe, affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate, and age- and activity-appropriate supervised visitation and exchange services.

The Committee will attain this goal by completing the following:

- Increase the County, Court, FOC, local area attorneys, child protective services, SafeHouse Center's and others community organization's ability to communicate with one another, and utilize the local supervised visitation center services in cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse.
- Ensure that the local supervised visitation center also has the ability to communicate with and refer survivors to utilize County, Court, FOC, area attorneys, child protective services, and SafeHouse Center services (i.e. Personal Protection Orders, Court assistance, victim advocacy services) in cases where clients who are survivors need additional assistance.
- Create a long-term, broad, strategic funding plan to ensure that supervised visitation and exchange services continue permanently in Washtenaw County to

effectively address cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse cases in supervised visitation and exchange.

- Increase community awareness and education on the vital need for supervised visitation and exchanges in cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse.
- Ensure that staff from the local supervised visitation center, local domestic violence shelter, county, child protective services, Court, Friend of the Court and area attorneys are trained to effectively handle cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse with respect to supervised visitation and exchange.

Underlying themes within each of these objectives are to increase the ability of the Local Supervised Visitation Center (LSVC) and other organizations to provide services to underserved and traditionally marginalized populations (i.e. low socioeconomic status, survivors of domestic violence). This project aims to strengthen community partnerships for a safer community and enhance the ability of key community partners to prevent crime related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or assault, stalking and child abuse in supervised visitation and exchange settings.

Since July of 2007, the Supervised Parenting and Exchange Program of Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County (“SP/SE” or “CSSW”) has provided supervised visitation and/or exchange services to a total 16 families including 33 parents and 21 children. Currently, twelve families are actively participating in the program on at least a monthly basis. The other families do not participate regularly although their cases remain open. The majority of cases are referred through the Friend of the Court. Although there is no clearly established method of referral, most parents are ordered to participate by the Court and told by the Court or Friend of the Court to contact the program to schedule intake interviews. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of cases in Washtenaw County that are referred to the Program have a history of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, sexual assault or abuse or child abuse.

Gaps in service are evident by the discrepancy between the number of reported cases of domestic violence from the local domestic violence shelter and advocacy agency (SafeHouse Center), actual reported domestic violence incidents in Washtenaw County, and the lack of clients utilizing supervised visitation and exchange services. According to SafeHouse Center, a total of 5,559 (unduplicated) victims/survivors received services in 2005. Yet, the Uniform Crime Report reported there were only 1408 victims of domestic violence in Washtenaw County in 2005 (83% of those reported cases were perpetrated by a partner (boyfriend/girlfriend, child in common,

common law spouse, homosexual relationship, resident boyfriend/girlfriend, or spouse).

SafeHouse Center reported more than four times as many victims/survivors in the County in the year 2005 than the Uniform Crime Report. If we use the unduplicated numbers reported by SafeHouse, and assume that the number of domestic violence victims/survivors has remained relatively stable (or possibly increased) since 2005, we can safely estimate that a quarter (around 1500) of those domestic violence cases involved children (SafeHouse numbers indicated that of all the clients in 2005, 216 of those victims were provided shelter services with 88 of those shelter clients being children). Yet, the LSVIC has received less than 25 referrals for services in a 7 month period. The data from HelpSource Agency suggests consistency with those that Catholic Social Services has seen in the past 7 months. It is clear that there are a great number of underserved clients in Washtenaw County who could potentially benefit enormously from supervised visitation and exchange services.

In addition, while the program has received a total of 21 referrals (that are actually known: if parents fail to contact the program, there is no way of knowing whether clients were referred), only 16 of those have actually elected to utilize the service. There are a number of reasons that clients elect not to utilize services; however, the majority of the clients have indicated program fees as a major reason for not utilizing services. The SP/SE program of CSSW has seen a trend in regards to clients. The majority of SP/SE clients is of low socioeconomic status, and fall substantially below the median income of \$51,000 for Washtenaw County. Thirty-five percent (35%) are earning between \$10,000 and \$31,000. An additional 25% of the program's clients are living at or below the poverty line (<\$10,000). In contrast, countywide, only 10.4% of people in Washtenaw County are living in poverty according to the most recent Census data. Thus, the program sees an over-representation of people in the county who are living in poverty, or are of low socioeconomic status.

IMPACT ON PERSONNEL:

None

IMPACT ON BUDGET:

The total program cost is \$400,000. All of the federal funds received will be pass-through from the County to Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw. No local match is required.

IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:

The budget includes indirect costs at an approved rate of 15.9% for a total of \$54,874.

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:

The County will act as the fiduciary for the grant, which will support the continued leadership of Catholic Social Services, in partnership with SafeHouse and other agencies, to provide the Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange program to the community.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:

This action conforms with County policies.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:

Resolution

Grant application

A RESOLUTION RATIFYING THE SIGNATURE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR ON THE GRANT APPLICATION TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FOR THE SAFE HAVENS – SUPERVISED VISITATION AND SAFE EXCHANGE PROGRAM GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$400,000 FOR THE PERIOD OF OCTOBER 1, 2008 THROUGH OCTOBER 1, 2011

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 19, 2008

WHEREAS, following the closure of HelpSource Agency, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw (CSSW) assumed the Supervised Visitation program, which ensures a safe and comfortable atmosphere when children of domestic violence survivors undergo visitation and/or exchange between their parents; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is fortunate that these services were continued without disruption; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ) recently advertised a Request for Proposals that could provide a uniquely suitable funding stream to support and expand the Supervised Visitation program under CSSW's continued leadership; and

WHEREAS, because the US DOJ will only consider applications from a local unit of government that is working in partnership with a non-profit service delivery agency (or agencies), Catholic Social Services approached Washtenaw County to act as the applicant and fiduciary for the grant; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Circuit Court, Friend of the Court, SafeHouse Center, have also stated their commitment to the project; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Safe Havens Project is to coordinate a systematic response to all cases of Inter Personal Violence (IPV) and reduce the reoccurrence of domestic violence while providing a safe and comfortable atmosphere for visitation and exchange; and

WHEREAS, Safe Havens will provide survivors and children of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, sexual assault or abuse and child abuse safe, affordable,

accessible, culturally appropriate and age and activity appropriate supervised visitation and exchange services in Washtenaw County; and

WHEREAS, Catholic Social Services has described in detail the actions that are necessary to achieve these goals in a systematic way; and

WHEREAS, the County is pleased to act as the fiduciary and key partner in this worthy endeavor

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby ratifies the signature of the Administrator on the application with United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women in the amount of \$400,000 for the period from October 1, 2008 through October 1, 2011 as on file with the County Clerk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners takes the following actions contingent upon receipt of the grant award in conformity with the application:

1. Authorizing the Administrator to sign the Notice of Grant Award;
2. Approving the budget, as attached hereto and made a part hereof;
3. Authorizing the County Administrator to sign delegate contracts upon review of Corporation Counsel to be filed with the County Clerk.

Catholic Social Services
Safe Havens - Supervised Visitation Grant
October 1, 2008 through October 1, 2011

	Current Budget	Revised Budget	Variance
50000 Federal Revenue	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000
80000 Other Services & Charges	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000