
Sponsor: Public Health

Meeting Date: 2/7/2023

Title: Grant Award from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety,
Office of Justice Programs, Crime Victim Services for Violence
Against Women Act STOP Special Project

File Number: 2023-016

Background and Rationale:

Public Health's Sexual Offense Services (SOS) program provides victims of sexual violence 24/7 crisis advocacy, ongoing individual advocacy, counseling and support, community awareness, information and education. SOS services have been provided in Ramsey County since 1976 and SOS provides services to approximately 1,100 victims of sexual violence, annually. These services include:

- Crisis intervention 24/7/365 through SOS crisis phone services.
- Short-term emotional support.
- Assistance in securing emergency services such as shelter, food, childcare, clothing and other necessities.
- Transportation as necessary and appropriate.
- Information and referral regarding criminal justice process, victim's rights, other victim service referrals including counseling options, Legal Advocacy for Victim service immigration services and other community organizations services.
- Assistance and accompaniment in obtaining emergency medical procedures 24/7/365 and any additional follow up information and referral.
- Assistance to survivors including any criminal justice system services including accompaniment during criminal justice events including law enforcement investigations, notification regarding criminal justice events and with victim impact statement needs.
- Assistance to survivors during civil, and/or family court activities and other legal matters.
- Assistance to survivors in filing victim compensation claims.
- Assistance to survivors in accessing human/social/family services.
- Assistance with interpretation, translation and culturally appropriate materials.
- Assistance with emergency shelter and housing services including transitional and relocation assistance.
- Follow up with victim survivors after initial contact and post any criminal justice events.

Public Health applied for a grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety titled Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) STOP special project to develop, implement and pilot a program offering victims of sexual violence options when reporting to law enforcement and a multijurisdictional investigator through the Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD). This grant supports victims/survivors served by Public Health's SOS program who choose to report a sex crime and/or desire more autonomy and control over their engagement within the criminal justice system (CJS).

Ramsey County has committed to providing trauma informed and victim-centered care through the Implementation Plan for System Change (Plan) which was placed into action in 2019. The Plan was developed by the Sexual Assault Collaborative which is made up of all nine law enforcement

agencies in Ramsey County, the County Attorney's Office and Public Health. A key element in this plan is direct collaboration and referrals from SPPD to SOS allowing sexual assault advocates to support victims reporting to law enforcement. The special project that will be developed and piloted from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024, will expand SOS services creating an avenue for victims of sexual assault to report directly to an advocate and have greater control of the depth of the investigation they desire. End Violence Against Women International published "Opening Doors: Alternative Reporting Options for Sexual Assault Victims" by Lonsway, Archambault, Huhtanen which articulates the success of offering reporting options and the significant community demand to expand resources outside of the criminal justice system.

Additionally, this grant will fund an existing sex crimes investigator from SPPD to provide consultation and guidance across jurisdictions. Supplying expertise in the investigation process will significantly mitigate the re-traumatization of a victim by ensuring that trauma informed care is of the greatest standard and minimizing a victim's chances of being re-exposed to the crime through efficient and effective protocols and procedures.

To accomplish this work, Public Health will use an existing position throughout the term of the grant to develop, implement, evaluate and complete the pilot program. SPPD will use one previously approved limited duration sex crime investigator to support the program development and provide multijurisdictional investigative support.

The organizational experience of Public Health will also lead to the effectiveness of the proposed activities. Public Health has extensive experience engaging residents and meeting community needs that are culturally specific and require an alternative to traditional reporting measures including Black/African American, African-Born, Asian-Pacific Islander, Latino populations, LGBTQ communities, and Native American populations

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the submittal of the grant application to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs, Crime Victim Services in the amount of \$306,455 for Violence Against Women Act STOP special project.
2. Accept a grant award and approve a grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs, Crime Victim Services for Violence Against Women Act STOP special project for the period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024, in the amount of \$306,455.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreement.
4. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and execute amendments to agreements in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Frethem, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Frethem, MatasCastillo, McGuire, Moran, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board