

Request for Board Action Details

File #: 2023-016

Type: Administrative Item **Status:** Passed

In control: Board of Commissioners

On agenda: 2/7/2023 **Final action:** 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

Sponsors: Public Health

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Grant Agreement, 2. Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/7/2023	1	Board of Commissioners	approved	Pass

Sponsor: Public Health

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

Recommendation

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.

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

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being Prosperity Opportunity Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

Public Health recognizes that sexual violence is supported by all forms of oppression. To address this, the goals, objectives and outcomes of SOS's practices, structure and funding requests are centered to serve residents who are more likely to be marginalized in society. The funding of this grant supports one limited duration position that provides trauma-informed, culturally competent services and assistance with embedding into SOS equitable policies and procedures that are trauma-informed, culturally competent services to underserved communities in Ramsey County who have experienced sexual violence and do not desire nor feel safe engaging with the existing criminal justice system.

Most primary victim survivors served by SOS are non-White. Racially and ethnically diverse communities experience sexual violence at higher rates than White populations as reflected in the National Crime Victimization Survey and data collected by SOS. With the high disparity of sexual violence in the Black communities, the SOS program commits to identifying new options for victims to feel empowered and safe if wishing to report a crime.

SOS is determined to make sexual violence advocacy services accessible to victims/survivors with limited English proficiency as well as deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Four of six staff speak and write fluently in another language (Hmong, Spanish, Arabic) and several more volunteer advocates speak additional languages including Somali, Swahili, Mandarin, Cantonese, French, Portuguese and more. All employees and volunteers are trained on and access the Language Line as a tool to provide 24/7 translation services in over 240 languages.

In the last two years, SOS has engaged in multiple outreach activities with a diverse array of disciplines including multiple private and public schools, Public Health, Ramsey County Social Services, shelters for people experiencing homelessness, libraries, the National Guard, clinics and other community-based programs. In partnership with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and medical providers, SOS helped train every new and current patrol officer in Ramsey County from all nine law enforcement agencies in 2019-2020. SOS is also a standing member of the Ramsey County Children's Multidisciplinary Team, especially with cases where there is risk of sexual violence and exploitation, and the Ramsey County Adult Protection Multidisciplinary Team. Additionally, SOS supported the Minnesota Department of Human Services in developing statewide training for nursing homes and elderly care facilities in identifying signs of sexual violence, mitigating risks and supporting survivors.

Community Participation Level and Impact

SOS informs clients about and offers referrals to community culturally specific partner programs. SOS has led and supported various community outreach events and campaigns including Start by Believing, an annual SOS Walk to Honor Survivors and Sexual Violence Action Program with Saint Paul Public Schools. Additional methods of outreach and community involvement include an online evaluation of services for clients, an ASKSOS email for community members and stakeholders to easily connect with SOS staff, and when fiscally able, SOS provides focus groups to seek input from both victims and survivors but also community stakeholders. SOS has one staff member dedicated to outreach to provide awareness and education regarding sexual violence and SOS services. Additionally, the Sexual Assault Protocol Team is a partnership with over 90 people participating from over 30 agencies.

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

Fiscal Impact

The program costs will be covered by grant funding through the Minnesota Department of Public Safety in the amount of \$306,455 between January 1, 2023 and December 21, 2024. The grant requires a match in the amount of \$102,152. This amount is included in the 2023 Public Health budget. To accomplish this work, Public Health will use an existing limited duration position.

Last Previous Action

None.

Attachments

1. Grant Agreement