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**Sponsor:** County Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office

**Meeting Date:** 6/15/2021

**Title:** 2021 Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects Grant from the State of Minnesota

**File Number:** 2021-294

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**Background and Rationale:**

In January of 2021, the State of Minnesota through its Office of Justice Programs requested proposals for Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors special projects grant (VAWA STOP) to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to combat violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. These grant funds are for time-limited special projects to create systems change by improving the criminal justice system's response to violence against women and eligible projects must be a collaborative effort between criminal justice system agencies and community-based sexual assault and/or domestic violence programs.

Ramsey County's groundbreaking two-year study of 646 reported sexual assaults revealed that far too few incidents of sexual violence are ever reported and, of those that are, only a small fraction result in perpetrators being charged and brought to justice. The study culminated in a report, Ramsey County Sexual Assault Systems Review (SASR) (<https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/county-attorneys-office/community-initiatives/sexual-assault-systems-review>), which outlined multiple recommendations to improve the justice system response to ensure victims feel supported in reporting to law enforcement. In response to the findings, Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul and the City of Roseville reallocated resources to provide additional sexual assault investigators and Ramsey County created two key grant-funded positions to systemically improve the way law enforcement, prosecutors and justice system partners respond to sexual violence. To improve collaboration among the agencies, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, and Public Health's Sexual Offense Services developed an inter-agency coalition to facilitate victim-centered investigations, prosecutions and support. This enabled us to establish best-practice protocols by having prosecutors engage earlier with investigators and patrol officers.

To continue to build this more effective system of response, train staff across agencies, create performance measures and track success, the County Attorney's Office requested 2021 funding from the State of Minnesota through its Office of Justice Programs from the VAWA STOP special projects grant for two dedicated staff: 1.0 full-time equivalent investigator in Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and 1.0 full-time equivalent prosecutor in the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Without these dedicated resources, both offices do not have the capacity to devote the time and expertise needed to change systems without negatively impacting caseloads. This grant enables the Sheriff's Office and County Attorney's Office to work collaboratively with the increased capacity of the Saint Paul Police and Public Health's Sexual Offense Services.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects 2021 grant application to the Office of Justice Programs for effective law enforcement and prosecution services to combat violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking.
2. Accept the Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects 2021 Grant and approve the grant agreement with the Office of Justice Programs for effective law enforcement and prosecution services for the period of April 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022 in the amount of \$350,000.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreement.
4. Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the County Attorney's Office by 1.0 Full Time Equivalent Assistant County Attorney.
5. Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the Sheriff's Office by 1.0 Full Time Equivalent Deputy Sheriff.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner MatasCastillo, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: \_\_\_\_\_



Abby Goldsmith, Interim Chief Clerk - County Board