

**61625**

**TO:** Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

**FROM:** Robin Schlaff  
Director, Office for Women

**DATE:** February 20, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Authority to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley for the provision of free comprehensive civil legal services to the indigent as well as legal assistance to low-income immigrants at the County's Mount Vernon District Office, which is a more convenient location for those living in southern Westchester County

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The attached Resolution, if approved by your Honorable Board, would authorize the County of Westchester, acting by and through its Office for Women, (the "County") to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement (the "Agreement") with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley ("LSHV"), pursuant to which LSHV will provide free comprehensive civil legal services to the indigent as well as legal assistance to low-income immigrants at the County's Mount Vernon District Office, which is a more convenient location for those living in southern Westchester County, for a term commencing on January 1, 2018 and continuing through December 31, 2018, in an amount not-to-exceed \$601,000, net of County charges, to be paid quarterly pursuant to an approved budget.

LSHV has successfully provided the aforementioned services under previous County contracts since 2008, offering a full array of services to low-income individuals and families requiring legal assistance in meeting their essential needs and to preserve the stability of their households. LSHV is the only provider of comprehensive legal services in the County and has represented tens of thousands of clients in Westchester with high-quality, competent, accessible attorneys and paralegals.

The proposed Agreement will serve a public purpose by providing legal services to low-income residents of southern Westchester County. LSHV will provide advice, counsel, brief services and direct representation in a wide array of civil matters including housing, public benefits, education, elder law, consumer, employment and family law matters.

LSHV will subcontract with My Sisters' Place, Inc. ("My Sisters' Place") to provide legal services as well as crisis intervention and individual counseling for women who are victims of domestic

violence, thereby enhancing the safety and independence of abused women. If abused women are helped to be safe they are not as likely to return to dependence on their abusers, thereby reducing public safety costs and medical costs. If they are helped to empower themselves to be independent and self-sufficient they are not as likely to be dependent on public assistance.

LSHV will also subcontract with Hudson Valley Justice Center (“HVJC”) to provide additional legal assistance to immigrants. Immigrants seeking legal relief have extra burdens such as language and cultural barriers vis-à-vis using the courts and the legal system. Because of immigration issues, they may be fearful of the legal system. Legal assistance can keep these individuals from having to remain dependent on social service systems and help them mainstream into the American culture.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement are as follows:

- LSHV will provide advice, counsel, brief services and direct representation in civil matters including housing, public benefits, education, elder law, consumer, employment and family law matters in approximately 375 cases;
- My Sisters’ Place will provide legal services as well as crisis intervention and individual counseling in approximately 250 cases for women who are victims of domestic violence; and
- HVJC will provide legal assistance in approximately 115 cases to poor and low-income Westchester County immigrant residents in matters including housing, family law, public benefits, education, elder law, consumer, employment and immigration as well as conduct 10 community outreach events and legal education seminars.

During the previous contract term, LSHV opened 370 new cases; My Sisters’ Place opened 377 new cases; and HVJC handled 105 cases.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement will be tracked and monitored by the Office for Women.

Under the Westchester County Procurement Policy Section 3(a)(xxi), your Honorable Board may determine “by resolution passed prior to commencing procurement that compliance with the Procurement Policy would not be in the best interests of the County.” As LSHV has successfully provided these vital services for the County under previous contracts since 2008, and for the reasons set forth above, it is requested that your Honorable Board make the determination that it is in the best interests of the County to exempt from the application of the procedural requirements of the Westchester County Procurement Policy the proposed Agreement with LSHV.

Attached for your consideration is a proposed Resolution.

## RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Director of the Office for Women, be it hereby

**RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Section 3(a)(xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy, it is hereby determined that application of the procedural requirements contained therein, including the necessity of soliciting written price quotations, is neither cost effective nor expedient, and accordingly, not in the best interests of the County in connection with the procurement of an agreement with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley pursuant to which Legal Services of the Hudson Valley will provide free comprehensive legal services to the indigent as well as legal assistance to low-income immigrants, at the County's Mount Vernon District Office.