

11102

TO: Board of Acquisition and Contract

FROM: Camille Failla Murphy
Director, Office for Women

DATE: May 28, 2010

SUBJECT: Resolution to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with Westchester Community Opportunity Program, Inc./Victims Assistance Services for the provision of safety planning education, orientation, and advocacy services for domestic violence victims seeking Orders of Protection in the Yonkers Family Court, pursuant to Section 3(a)xxi of the Westchester County Procurement Policy and Procedures.

Authority is hereby requested from your Honorable Board to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy a contract with Westchester Community Opportunity Program, Inc./Victims Assistance Services (“VAS”) for the provision of safety planning education, orientation, and advocacy services for domestic violence victims seeking Orders of Protection in the Yonkers Family Court, for a term of one year commencing January 1, 2010 and terminating December 31, 2010 in an amount not-to-exceed Forty-Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty-Seven Dollars (\$49,827).

VAS was selected to provide these services as a result of a Request for Proposals in 2008, and surpassed their goals during their first contract term. They have helped many people. The following are a few accounts of the impact of their services:

- 1.) A twenty-two year old woman went to VAS to obtain an Order of Protection for herself and her children. The client expressed relief that child care was available on site and was grateful for the accompaniment to the legal service program. VAS also provided the client with a housing list for relocation and metro passes to get home after court. The client subsequently went back to VAS to thank the advocate for all the help provided to her and her children.
- 2.) A forty-five year old woman filed for an Order of Protection through the Probation Department. VAS provided counseling services and called for legal services. VAS gave

the client a listing of domestic violence resources and reviewed her safety plan with her. The client was reassured to learn about domestic violence resources available in the county and was grateful for the emotional support provided by VAS staff.

- 3.) A teenager went to court for assistance in filing an Order of Protection against her ex-boyfriend. VAS provided domestic violence resources and reviewed the client's safety plan with her and her mother. The teen girl stated that she was "very happy for the help" and thankful that there was somebody she could speak to about her situation.
- 4.) A man went to VAS to file an Order of Protection on behalf of his children. He stated that he was "glad to see that there are services to help dads who have custody of their children and are trying to help their kids." The client was given additional counseling resources for children and information was given on how Orders are served.

The services they provide, as well as the amount of clients that are served, depicts the ability VAS has to meet the performance goals and perform for Westchester taxpayers. Restarting the RFP process would be disadvantageous to potential clients; any new service provider would need a "start up" period where they would, most likely, not be able to serve the designated amount of clients or provide the same quality of service. The quality and quantity of service that VAS can offer has already been demonstrated during their first contract term. For these reasons, it is in the County's best interests not to disrupt the current quality of services being provided by repeating the RFP process.

The proposed agreement will promote public health, safety and general welfare by enhancing the safety and independence of victims of domestic violence. If victims 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 enabled to be independent and self-sufficient they are not as likely to be dependent on public assistance. One of the main ways this program will save taxpayer dollars is by reducing the duplication of services. While victims are assisted, they will be assessed by VAS in order to provide services specific to their needs. Such services may include safety planning, referrals, or help through the court process. Without this assessment, victims would likely go to a number of other agencies seeking services, wasting time and money. Victims will be able to receive immediate assistance from VAS, which will ultimately increase their overall safety. In 2009, VAS served approximately 1,230 victims. This agreement differs from the previous agreement in that during the proposed contract term, staff from the Family Justice Center will provide these services in the White Plains Family Court. In addition, the consultant advocate who provided coverage one day a week in Yonkers will no longer be there. As a result of these changes, the program will only provide services in Yonkers and expects to serve 500 victims.

The effectiveness of this program will be measured by tracking the number of clients who received safety planning and referral information to community mental health services, medical services, and family counseling and support services as needed. In addition, also to be tracked and monitored are the number of men and women served, total couple violence, clients referred to Pace or Probation, and how many clients were accompanied to court. For example, in 2009:

- 60% of clients were assisted with safety planning
- 60% of clients were provided with crisis intervention and/or supportive counseling
- 75% of clients were provided with information and referrals to follow-up services

If this resolution were not approved, the safety and security of domestic violence victims would be compromised. Without receiving these vital support services, the probability of continued and escalating abuse is substantially increased. This may consequently endanger their lives and the lives of their children.

Under the Westchester County Procurement Policy Section 3(a)(xxi), your Honorable Board may determine “by resolution passed prior to commencing such procurement, that compliance with this policy would not be in the best interests of the County.” As VAS has proven their ability to provide these services, I ask 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 VAS.

Accordingly, a resolution to exempt the procurement of a contract with VAS is hereby submitted for your Honorable Board’s consideration.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 6-17-2010 - JOMARY VIEIRA SECRETARY

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 and Procedures, 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 for safety planning education, orientation, and advocacy services for domestic violence victims seeking Orders of Protection in the Yonkers Family Court, with Westchester Community Opportunity Program, Inc./Victims Assistance Services, 2269 Saw Mill River Road, Building 3, Elmsford, New York 10523.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 6-17-2010 - JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY