

18179

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

FROM: Diane G. Balistreri
Coordinator, Office for Women

DATE: April 7, 2011

SUBJECT: Authority to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with My Sisters' Place, Inc. to provide legal services in Yonkers to women victims of domestic violence pursuant to Section 3(a)(xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy

Authority is hereby requested from your Honorable Board to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with My Sisters' Place, Inc. ("My Sisters' Place") for provision of legal services in Yonkers to women victims of domestic violence.

The proposed agreement will have a term of one year beginning January 1, 2011 and ending December 31, 2011, for an amount not-to-exceed Ninety-One Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Dollars (\$91,270), to be paid quarterly pursuant to an approved budget.

Please be advised that Section 459-c of the New York Social Services Law directs social services districts, such as the County, to offer and provide non-residential services to victims of domestic violence, whether eligible or ineligible for public assistance. Non-residential services programs must have the ability to provide the following services:

- 1) Information and Referral services
- 2) Advocacy
- 3) Counseling
- 4) Community education and outreach activities
- 5) Hotline services

My Sisters' Place's legal program serves women for representation in domestic violence, support, custody and visitation litigation, enabling those women to leave their abusive partners and survive independently. My Sisters' Place began providing legal services in 1997. It has since successfully provided these services to over 8,500 victims, as Yonkers has the second

highest number of Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs) in Westchester (2,499 out of 12,970 in 2010).

The proposed agreement will serve a public purpose by enhancing the safety and independence of abused women. If abused women are empowered to learn how to develop and maintain their own safety 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 become independent and self-sufficient they are not as likely to be dependent on public assistance.

The goals and objectives of the proposed agreement are for My Sisters' Place to provide legal assistance to 125 unduplicated victims in at least 350 cases. During the previous contract term, My Sisters' Place provided legal assistance to 141 unduplicated victims in 486 cases.

The goals and objectives of the proposed agreement will be tracked and monitored by the Office for Women, which will be responsible for monitoring My Sisters' Place's performance by means of site visits, as well as their monthly statistics and quarterly narratives. The effectiveness of the legal program will be determined by benefits received as a result of closed cases. Such benefits include: obtaining or maintaining custody of children; obtaining or preserving the right to visitation; obtaining a divorce, separation or annulment; obtaining an Order of Protection; and obtaining, preserving or increasing child support. The following are a few examples of benefits received as a result of 526 closed cases in 2010:

- 16 clients obtained or maintained custody of their children
- 7 clients obtained or preserved the right to visitation
- 11 clients obtained an Order of Protection
- 5 clients obtained, preserved, or increased child support
- 392 clients obtained advice and counsel on a family matter

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." Due to the fact that Yonkers reports nearly 20% of the County's DIRs, resulting in the need for legal services for domestic violence victims, and for the reasons set forth above, 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 an agreement with My Sisters' Place to provide legal services to women victims of domestic violence.

Accordingly, I recommend approval of the attached proposed Resolution.

RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Coordinator 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 My Sisters' Place, Inc. for the provision of legal services in Yonkers to women victims of domestic violence.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 4-21-2011 - JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY