

**18476**

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

**FROM:** Diane G. Balistreri  
Coordinator, Office for Women

**DATE:** April 14, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Authority to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley to provide, through its Domestic Violence Unit, comprehensive civil legal services to victims of domestic violence in Westchester County, with preference given to those referred through the Family Court Legal Centers in White Plains and Yonkers, pursuant to Section 3(a)(xii)

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Authority is hereby requested from your Honorable Board to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (“LSHV”) for provision of comprehensive civil legal services to victims of domestic violence who fit within LSHV’s income guidelines.

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 Four Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty-Two Dollars (\$432,782), to be paid quarterly pursuant to an approved budget.

Clients for this program are referred by the Family Court Legal Centers in White Plains and Yonkers, and by self-referral directly to LSHV. LSHV has developed over the course of previous contracts a seamless working relationship with the courts and with the Family Court Legal Centers, such that no eligible client who asks for it has been refused service.

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (then called Westchester Putnam Legal Services) began providing such services under contract to the County in 1999. In August, 1999 when the Family Court Legal Center opened in the Family Court in White Plains, the County contracted with LSHV to provide such services specifically for referrals from that Center.

In 2001, the County recognized the value of this service by contracting with the agency to provide the same service to the Family Court Legal Center newly opened in the Yonkers Family

Court. Judges, in whose courts the LSHV attorneys make over 800 appearances a year are unanimously in favor of having these specialized and knowledgeable attorneys available.

The proposed agreement will serve a public purpose by enhancing the safety and independence of victims of domestic abuse. If victims 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. By supplying legal representation in family court for victims who cannot afford representation, LSHV assists in securing safety for victims and their children, and helps them avoid dependency on public assistance.

The goals and objectives of the proposed agreement are for LSHV to serve approximately 250 unduplicated victims and handle 400 cases during the proposed contract term. During the previous contract term, LSHV served 266 unduplicated victims and handled a total of 473 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 LSHV's performance by means of site visits, as well as their quarterly statistics and narratives. The effectiveness of the program will be determined by the outcomes of court related cases. Some of the outcomes of family law matters may include whether or not the victim obtained or maintained custody of child(ren); obtained or preserved right to visitation; obtained a divorce, separation or annulment; obtained assigned divorce counsel; obtained guardianship or adoption for dependent child; obtained an Order of Protection; obtained, preserved or increased child support; obtained, preserved or increased spousal support; obtained advice and counsel on a family matter; obtained non-litigation advocacy services on a family matter; or obtained referral on a family matter. The following are a few examples of benefits received as a result of 462 closed cases in 2010:

- 96 clients obtained an Order of Protection
- 93 clients obtained or maintained custody of their children
- 116 clients obtained advice and counsel on a family matter
- 26 clients obtained non-litigation advocacy services 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." LSHV began providing these services in 1967, and has since assisted more than 140,000 clients with nearly 11,000 served annually. As LSHV has successfully provided these vital services for the County under previous contracts since 1999, 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 Legal Services of the Hudson Valley.

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 Legal Services of the Hudson Valley for the provision of comprehensive civil legal services to victims of domestic violence who fit within its guidelines.



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