

55852

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

FROM: Honorable Robert P. Astorino
Westchester County Executive

Hon. Michael B. Kaplowitz, Chairman
Westchester County Board of Legislators

Robin Schlaff
Director, Office for Women

DATE: March 13, 2017

SUBJECT: Authority to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with My Sisters' Place, Inc. to provide legal services for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, for a term commencing on January 1, 2017 and continuing through December 31, 2017, for an amount not-to-exceed \$25,750

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 My Sisters' Place, Inc. ("My Sisters' Place") pursuant to which My Sisters' Place will provide, through its Center for Legal Services ("CLS"), legal services for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, for a term commencing on January 1, 2017 and continuing through December 31, 2017, for an amount not-to-exceed \$25,750, payable quarterly, pursuant to an approved budget.

Established in 1997, the CLS serves victims for direct representation in family law, immigration and human trafficking matters, enabling those victims to empower themselves and survive independently.

The proposed Agreement will serve a public purpose by enhancing the safety and independence of victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. 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. 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 services including, but not limited to, information and referrals, advice and counsel, and direct representation in family law, immigration and human trafficking matters. My Sisters' Place will provide consultations to approximately 140 victims and direct legal services to approximately 29 victims. During the previous contract term, My Sisters' Place provided consultations to 177 victims and direct legal services to 29 victims.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement are in the best interests of the County in terms of the public health, safety and general welfare, as providing legal services to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking will improve victim identification, screening, assessment and, ultimately, victim service provision.

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." Due to the fact that My Sisters' Place is Westchester County's sole resource for free immigration legal services to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, 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 My Sisters' Place.

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; and
- 5) Hotline services.

Attached for your consideration is a proposed Resolution.

RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Westchester County Executive, the Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, and 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 My Sisters' Place, Inc. pursuant to which My Sisters' Place Inc. will provide, through its Center for Legal Services, legal services for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 05/04/2017
LISA MARIJAJ, SECRETARY