



Legislation Text

File #: 2024-0540, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney

Staff Name and Phone Number: Shane Lewis 565-3150/Tatiana Lopez 565-2822

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services County Victim Services Program

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the District Attorney to execute a contract with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services to accept an award in the amount of \$248,756 for the term January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Executive Summary:

Board approval and authorization is requested to allow the District Attorney to sign a contract to continue participation in the County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime) funded by the State of California, Office of Emergency Services in the amount of \$248,756 from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

The objective of the Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime Program is to provide advocacy, case management and prosecution to some of the most vulnerable in Sonoma County, homeless victims of crime who may suffer from a disabling condition.

This program is funded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and due to a reduction in available VOCA funds, 2024 is expected to be the final year for this program. Partner organizations are aware that the program is not likely to renew. The program does not have a match requirement.

Discussion:

The unsheltered population continues to be one of Sonoma County's greatest challenges, and the 2023 Point in Time Count shows that a large portion of the just under 2,300 people homeless in the county are vulnerable to becoming victims of crime. The 2023 data shows that 27% of the unsheltered surveyed during the Count reported they had experienced domestic violence, 25% reported sex trade involvement, and 39% of survey participants reported having at least one disabling condition, requiring multiple types of resources to respond to the unique needs of this population. The Sonoma County Homeless Outreach Team provides essential services and support for this population whose vulnerability often finds them the victim of a crime, and some of whom are chronically homeless, disabled and/or polyvictims. Polyvictimization is the cumulative impact of trauma that results from experiencing multiple types of victimizations such as: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; neglect; witnessing violence; and separation from, abandonment by, or impairment of parents and/or caregivers due to drugs, illness, or incarceration versus multiple episodes of the same kind of victimization.

In 2022, the average age of those who died homeless in Sonoma County was 53, compared to the average age at death of the county population overall of 76.5 years. Connecting this vulnerable population to timely and essential services is truly a matter of life or death.

The Sonoma County Homeless Outreach Team serves victims experiencing homelessness by connecting them to essential services including congregate shelters and/or hotels via emergency vouchers (for those for whom it is not safe or who are unable to get into a congregate shelter). The team provides food, gas, bus, and Goodwill vouchers, as well as emergency provisions and basic needs supplies based on what each victim/family needs. As of December 2023, the team served 43 families and 271 individuals during the grant term. Eighty-two percent of the victims served in 2023 were victims of domestic violence. This is compared to 76% in 2022, 39% in 2020, and 34% in 2019. The numbers, unfortunately, are significantly on the rise. Some of the other highest reported victimizations this year included 49% of clients served experiencing bullying or verbal abuse, 50% reporting being the victim of physical assault, and 30% experiencing sexual assault recently as an adult. In 2023, 90% of clients served received some form of emergency financial assistance including fuel and/or food gift cards, clothing vouchers, and bus passes. Of the clients served in the past year, 61% were mainly residing in Santa Rosa. Many of those experiencing domestic violence are unable to leave their current living situation. The shortage of services available including emergency shelter and affordable housing results in victims returning home to their abuser or moving to new relationships where they fall into the same pattern.

One of the goals of the program is to serve these highly vulnerable populations by focusing on wrap-around services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or elder abuse as well as victims with disabilities. Many clients assisted by the team are attempting to flee domestic violence with their children after having been isolated by their abusers. Providing safety and support for them is especially crucial. The team is based at various satellite locations including VOICES, The Living Room, and Ruthless Kindness mobile pet clinics as well as the Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC). Victims are referred by way of warm handoffs to FJCSC partners, including Legal Aid, YWCA, Verity, Sonoma Works, Catholic Charities (for immigration services), law enforcement, the Redwood Children's Center, and the Council on Aging for rapid support.

Since the program's inception in 2016, the team has included the Coordinator, a Verity Advocate, a YWCA advocate, and a Catholic Charities advocate. Over the past year, some of the original program partners have struggled with staffing and as a result we have created new partnerships to build on the strength of the program. The new collaborative relationships include The Living Room, VOICES, and Ruthless Kindness. The has developed relationships with providers throughout the county to ensure victims are connected to resources and services no matter where they are located - from Cloverdale, to Rio Nido, to Petaluma. Clients know the team is there for them - no matter the obstacles. In times like this, the support this team provides can make or break whether a domestic violence victim, for example, believes that she/he has the support and resources to leave an abusive relationship.

The Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime program expands and enhances a coordinated system of multi-disciplinary response, outreach, and case management and provides timely and comprehensive services to homeless crime victims that may have disabling conditions.

Core services provided by partners include:

- Project Coordination and data tracking
- Specialty outreach for homeless crime victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as general crimes to provide wrap around services
- Complete screening by outreach workers to direct victims to services
- Emergency resources available to resolve immediate needs like food, clothing, and transportation
- Assistance with referrals for housing, health, and social services
- Coordinated Entry intake to encourage clients to participate in the full screening and assistance through nonprofit agencies; as well as coordination with shelters and services as needed
- 24/7 hotline resource cards and care kits provided

Goals of the Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime Grant Program

1. Assist homeless victims of crime, who may have a disabling condition, to obtain housing, health services, and social services.
2. Identify and address facts that increase the likelihood that homeless individuals who may have a disabling condition will become crime victims.
3. Foster coordination across the County to sustainably address multiple difficulties of homeless victims of crime who may have a disabling condition.

Funds received for this program will go toward a Homeless Outreach Coordinator; contracted through a partnership with Council on Aging; case management and direct services provided through VOICES, Verity, Ruthless Kindness, and The Living Room; gap housing; housing supplies; outreach services; and mileage.

2024 is expected to be the final year of this program due to a reduction in available funding across the country for victim services programs through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

January 31, 2023: Board approved the acceptance of the California Office of Emergency Services' County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime) for grant term January 2023 through December 2023.

April 19, 2022: Board approved the acceptance of the California Office of Emergency Services' County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime) for grant term January 2022 through December 2022.

January 26, 2021: Board approved the acceptance of California Office of Emergency Services' County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime) for grant term January 2021 through December 2021.

February 4, 2020: Board approved the acceptance of California Office of Emergency Services' County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime) for grant term January 2020 through December 2020.

October 23, 2018: Board approved the extension of the program through December 2019. November 1, 2016:

The Board of Supervisors granted approval to accept the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services for County Victim Services Program (Outreach and Services to Homeless Victims of Crime for the grant term July 2016 through June 2018.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY 25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$124,378	\$124,378	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$124,378	\$124,378	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$124,378	\$124,378	
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$124,378	\$124,378	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This grant is non-competitive, funds for the 2024 program were anticipated and included in the department budget for Fiscal Year 2023/24. The revenue and appropriations for FY 2024/25 will be included as part of budget development.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

There are no County positions funded with this grant.

Attachments:

- Resolution A - Grant Acceptance
- CalOES Grant Award Document

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A