

Department for Children, Youth and Families

Backup Material for Authorization of Grant Acceptance from the Office of Children and Family Services of the Safe Harbor Grant and to Amend the 2020 Adopted Budget to enter into Inter-Departmental Agreement with Albany County Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center

The Albany County Department for Children, Youth, and Families (ACDCYF) respectfully requests Legislative authorization to accept grant funding from the Office of Children and Family Services for the Child Right: Safe Harbor Initiative and to amend the 2020 adopted budget for the Department for Children, Youth and Families. The grant award for the 2020 funding year for the period of January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 is \$43,350 with no County share.

(ACDCYF) respectfully requests Legislative authorization to enter into an Interdepartmental Agreement with Albany County Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center (ACCVSVC) for facilitation of services related to the Safe Harbor initiative. The amount requested for facilitation of these services is \$7,000. The requested contract term will be January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020.

In 2008, New York State signed into legislation the Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act. Prior to the passage of this Act, sexually exploited youth involved in illegal activities did not receive the protection of the Family Court and were instead prosecuted criminally. As such, rather than viewed as victims, these children and youth were seen as offenders of the law and treated as such. With the passage of the Act, these children and youth are now viewed as victims, which enable them to receive services to provide for their safety and well-being, in addition to counseling and other specific services to help address their emotional needs.

Allowable use of Safe Harbor funds include:

1. Create or further develop a community taskforce to address the issue of the sexual exploitation of children on a community-wide basis among all stakeholders, including law enforcement, child welfare staff, runaway and homeless youth shelter staff (where applicable), local service providers, advocates, local school staff, medical providers, and any other community stakeholders;
2. Promote community awareness about the sexual exploitation of children, including information on identification, referral to services, through community events or other methods of disseminating information;
3. Provide case assessment and referral for services through a multi-disciplinary team approach, including the utilization of Child Advocacy Centers where such exist, to interview potentially sexually exploited children and develop case plans to meet their needs;

With the funding to date, DCYF has facilitated trainings and educational outreach to increase community awareness and knowledge on this subject matter.

In 2017, we established a critical team and developed protocol and processes to identify and service this population of youth. The Critical Team, as initially formed, consists of the following entities with other agencies to be included as warranted:

- Albany County Department for Children Youth and Families
- Albany County Attorney's Office
- Albany County Department of Probation
- Albany County Department of Social Services
- Albany County Department of Mental Health
- Albany Police Department
- Albany County Sheriff's Office
- Albany Police Department
- Bethlehem Police Department
- Colonie Police Department
- Albany County Crime Victims Sexual Violence Center
- St. Anne Institute
- Albany Medical Center
- St. Peter's Health Partners
- Forensic Nurse Practitioners of Schenectady
- Albany County Regional Immigration Assistance Center

ACCVSVC has a proven record and mechanism for responsiveness to victims of crimes, including sexual violence. Having ACCVSVC as an additional partner provides the ability to respond to victims outside of non-business hours as they have an established 24/7 response team. Crime Victims would be the point person for community agencies such as law enforcement, hospitals, and community-based organizations to reach out to when a referral for trafficking services are warranted, allowing for a seamless and consistent response team and approach.