



City Council Report

Date: July 8, 2014
To: City Council
Through: Christopher J. Brady, City Manager
From: Debbie Spinner, City Attorney
John Belatti, City Prosecutor
Subject: Agreement with Arizona Department of Public Safety
"Citywide"

Strategic Initiatives



Purpose and Recommendation

This report is to inform the City Council about the awarding of grant funds in the amount of \$120,632 from the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) for use during fiscal year 2015. This grant funding will be used for salaries and employee related expenses for two full time Victim Services Assistants (Advocates) in the Prosecutor's Office who provide criminal justice support/advocacy to domestic violence and restitution eligible victims of crime.

In order to obtain this funding, it is recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement between the City of Mesa and the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

Background

As a prosecutorial office, we are mandated to provide notification services to victims of crime. We also provide victims with additional services that, while not mandated, provide the victim with essential information and personal advocacy during a time that is uncomfortable or confusing.

Most victims are often unaware or unfamiliar with the services and resources that are available to them; resources that often provide education and information. With two advocates specifically dedicated to the domestic violence and restitution caseloads, they will be able to provide personal advocacy, timely and accurate case status updates, and court-related services. This provides victims an opportunity to receive special attention, which often has favorable results for all involved.

Providing consistent information to the victim and gathering restitution information from multiple sources has also been an important service we provide. Advocates assigned to these cases have helped victims deal with insurance companies and other agencies by providing a direct connection to the Court system.

In fiscal year 2012-2013, our Victim Services staff provided 38,113 services to 9,033 victims of crime. This includes 2,043 direct services provided to 838 new victims by our DPS-VOCA funded Advocates.

Discussion

This funding provided by the DPS-VOCA grant will allow our Office to continue providing criminal justice support/ advocacy services to victims, such as the following activities: providing information, referrals and connections to social services, shelters, criminal justice agencies, law enforcement agencies and legal service agencies; providing Crime Victim Compensation Claim information and assistance; advising victims of their rights by explaining the judicial system; advising victims of the State's offer/recommendation; contacting victims by phone one to two weeks prior to trial or restitution hearing date to verify appearance; providing follow-up contact to victims regarding case disposition information; providing assistance with Orders of Protection and Injunctions Against Harassment; accompanying victims to court proceedings; explaining the concept of restitution; and, obtaining and compiling information from victims for prosecutor case files.

Authorizing the City Manager to execute this agreement between the Arizona Department of Public Safety and the City of Mesa will allow the City Prosecutor's Office to provide continuous criminal justice support and personal advocacy to domestic violence and restitution eligible victims of crime.

Alternatives

The alternative is not to accept the grant funds. This is not recommended because either the City will have to pay for these services or the City will no longer provide advocacy services to victims of crime.

Fiscal Impact

Accepting this grant will allow the City to provide these much needed services to victims.

Coordinated With

Not applicable.