

Women's
Shelter
of South Texas

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Jcm DEC 18 2014
Nueces County
Commissioners Court
Administration

December 17, 2014

Nueces County Commissioners Court
Attn: Theresa McLemore
Nueces County Courthouse
901 Leopard, Ste. 302.03 303
Corpus Christi, TX 78401-3697

FY 13/14

Outside Agency Report

County Judge - \$500

Commissioner Pct 2 - \$500

Dear Judge Neal and Commissioners,

In accordance with the Outside Agency Funds Contract between the Women's Shelter of South Texas and Nueces County for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, the following final report is provided detailing services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Nueces County and utilization of county funds to support these services. The entire funding amount of \$1,000 was spent on family violence and child abuse prevention, intervention, counseling, and shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence and their families. The agency wants to again express appreciation for the support of Nueces County in our work on behalf of victims of domestic and sexual violence in our community.

It is the mission of the Women's Shelter of South Texas to prevent and ultimately end domestic violence and sexual assault in South Texas. In 2014, the Women's Shelter of South Texas is celebrating 36 years of service to the community. The agency continues to identify and serve adult and child victims each year. From September 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014, 2,787 adult and child victims were served. As compared to the 2012-2013 contract period, this was a 6% increase in clients served.

The Women's Shelter of South Texas was founded in 1977 by a small group of volunteers with the goal to provide safe shelter and a crisis hotline for victims of domestic violence in the Corpus Christi area. The agency was the third such organization formed in Texas to address this vital need. The agency is the only private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization specifically designed to serve adult and child victims of domestic and sexual violence across a twelve-county region of South Texas, which includes Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, and San Patricio counties.

The organization utilizes a client-centered approach to services, which transfers the power and control stolen by the offender back to the victim. Youth-directed services are a component of the comprehensive services offered by our agency, which emphasize blending crisis intervention with prevention of violence strategies. All services provided by the Women's Shelter of South Texas are free of charge for victims and their children,

regardless of whether the victim has the ability to make payment through insurance, Medicaid, or personal income.

The agency provided essential core services at no cost to victims including:

- Shelter/Safe House (65 bed) for women and their accompanying children, including the provision of clothing, food, and personal items for each individual and family
- 24-hour toll-free Crisis Hotline
- Crisis Intervention to reduce the immediate effects of trauma due to abuse
- Individual and Group Counseling for adults and children
- Case Management: individualized service planning, referrals to resources including employment, housing, educational opportunities, medical care, and childcare
- Youth Services: mentoring for school success, counseling, play therapy for young children, recreational activities, and summer activities
- Legal Advocacy: assistance regarding the criminal justice system, obtaining protective orders, crime victims' compensation, court accompaniment, and legal aid referrals
- Rape Crisis Services: crisis intervention, hospital accompaniment, and counseling
- Rural Outreach Services provided in eleven rural counties and in rural Nueces County: safety planning, peer counseling, information and referral, community education, emergency shelter transportation, and legal advocacy through outreach offices located in Bee, San Patricio, Kleberg, and Jim Wells counties

The goal of the Women's Shelter of South Texas is to address the needs of those experiencing trauma due to domestic or sexual violence and to provide quality services, safety, and stability to victims and optimize their choices so they may achieve and maintain violence-free lives. The Women's Shelter of South Texas is successful in reaching more victims in need of services and support due, in part, to the generosity shown to the agency by the Nueces County Commissioners Court.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the name.

Frances Wilson
President & CEO

Youth Services Program Project Accomplishments

In working towards the agency's mission to prevent and ultimately end domestic violence and sexual assault in South Texas, the Women's Shelter of South Texas understands that ending the often multi-generational cycle of violence begins with our children. Intervention and prevention steps must be taken at the earliest opportunity possible to assist in breaking the cycle of violence so that children and youth can grow up to achieve and maintain violence-free lives.

All children and youth seeking services, both through the safe shelter and as non-residential clients in the community, received individual and group counseling, play therapy, safety planning, age-appropriate social and recreational activities, family cohesiveness activities, and educational mentoring. Prevention strategies were introduced with emphasis on attitudes on violence, gender roles, healthy relationships, consent, respecting boundaries, and bystander attitudes and behaviors. Positive changes in children's self-esteem, enhanced problem-solving and coping skills, and feelings of empowerment and confidence occurred as a result of the program. All services offered by the agency include prevention of violence education and information to address the often multi-generational cycle of abuse and work towards ending domestic and sexual violence in future generations.

The agency worked closely with Child Protective Services (CPS) to identify domestic violence in their caseload and refer the non-abusing parent for services to provide support for the entire family. Parenting classes for victims with children under CPS supervision were conducted in Nueces and Aransas counties. The CPS mandated classes consisted of ten sessions focused on the effects of domestic violence on children and served as an opportunity to provide the attendees with education, information, and referral for agency services for both themselves and their children.

Family cohesiveness activities were conducted in the residential shelter facility, including parent-child interaction activities such as family reading time, homework time, and 'mommy and me time' where families are invited to take advantage of one-on-one time in the recreation room with support from youth staff. These activities were available for non-residential clients as well and encouraged positive parenting, open communications, tasks that can be accomplished together, education regarding safety and safety planning, and other activities that are engaging for all family members. Behavior intervention was a key component of all youth activities. Staff provided parents with strategies for setting boundaries, assertive parenting techniques, and non-violent discipline options. Staff also worked with the children to utilize non-violent coping mechanisms, respect, and increased communication skills with their parents.

A summer program for children ages 5-17 years of age was conducted at the shelter during a four-week period from June to July 2014. Participants were current residential or non-residential clients of the Women's Shelter of South Texas. Thirty-three children engaged in group activities centered around safety planning such as journaling, small group discussion, art projects, and fitness activities. Program participants enhanced their observation and awareness skills, discussed stress management and communication strategies, built self-esteem, and learned more about the dynamics and prevention of family violence.

Report from Youth Counselor:

“I worked with two children in the fall of 2013 through individual counseling and group counseling sessions with the family. The father and paternal-grandmother play a vital role in the lives of the two children. The seven year-old boy and the five year-old girl were living with their mother in California who became addicted to drugs and neglected the children on several occasions. In addition to neglect, the children experienced verbal abuse from their mother. The father and paternal-grandmother moved the children to Corpus Christi to give them a better life. The children started counseling with me as soon as they moved here. Initially, the children were very angry, felt betrayed by their mother, and hated their father and grandmother for pulling them away from their mother. Both children started a new school and had trouble adapting due to their turbulent emotions. The father and grandmother were uncomfortable and felt unsure about how to tell the children they would be living in Corpus Christi permanently and would not return to California to live with their mother. During our counseling session, the children were told by their father and grandmother about safe and healthy living and how Corpus Christi was going to be their new residence. Both children were heartbroken at first, but understood how important it was for them to live safe and healthy lives. After this breakthrough, the children had a change in behavior and began doing wonderfully at school and at home. The father shared that even the teachers noticed a huge significant change in both children. The family was very thankful for the counseling services I provided them with. I continue to counsel the children and meet with the family as needed.”

September 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014 Outcomes and Statistics

- Children and youth served: 1,346
- Children residing in the emergency shelter with an accompanying parent: 446
- Average length of stay in the shelter facility: 22 days (please note: no minimum or maximum length of stay is imposed as all services are individualized to meet each client's needs)
- Youth participating in counseling services: 898
- Children who attended summer Kids Camp: 33
- Safety planning: All children and youth ages five and older are provided safety planning information and activities in an age-appropriate manner. 1,239
- Social and recreational activities: All children were provided age-appropriate social and recreational activities. 416 participated in recreational and social groups.
- Legal Assistance: 622 children were included in legal advocacy received by their parent.
- Parent reported an improvement in the mental, emotional, and physical health of their child due to services received: 1,295 children

Outcome information is obtained through an evaluation of services form that is completed by clients on a voluntary and confidential basis. Outcome information from 2014 indicates:

- 95% of clients reported that their children's sense of safety increased due to services received
- 92% of clients reported that youth staff were supportive of their children's needs
- 95% of clients reported an increase in their children's awareness of the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence
- 97% of clients reported that counseling services assisted them