

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Memorandum

DATE: February 21, 2020

TO: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Mary Jo Meyers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Prepared by James Mathy, Administrator, Housing Division

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an informational report regarding domestic violence funding within the Housing Division's 2020 budget

Background

The 2020 DHHS Adopted Budget includes \$100,000 to assist homeless victims of domestic violence with emergency shelter options. These additional funds were included as part of a County Board amendment which specified that DHHS submit a plan no later than the March 2020 meeting cycle for review.

Discussion

In 2018, Milwaukee County's Housing Division received a three-year Department of Justice Grant to provide housing navigation services for victims of sex trafficking. Through this work, staff now recognizes that a majority of clients served by this grant are also longtime victims of domestic violence. While the grant does cover case management services, it does not cover any housing costs. There is currently a lack of housing options for victims of domestic violence in Milwaukee County, especially for those who do not have a well-documented history of homelessness. Based on internal staff reports, we could expect more than 100 referrals annually for this type of housing.

For this reason, the Housing Division is proposing a master lease program for this population utilizing the \$100,000 in funding. This would allow instant access to safe housing for participants until they can find permanent housing. The Housing Division has extensive experience with master lease programs and this proposal would work similar to the Division's other lease programs. DHHS would be the lease holder instead of the client, giving the client and the program maximum flexibility.

The Housing Division would work with Corporation Counsel for the language on each lease. The length of stay is designed to be six months or less but could be extended by Housing Division staff, if needed. Existing staff would take referrals through outreach, specifically generated by the County's Department of Justice Grant. This arrangement would also enable the Division to leverage the grant to support case management for the new housing program.

As a part of the housing pilot, \$30,000 of the \$100,000 in funding would be dedicated to additional services within the Housing Division for tenants as well as some funding for apartment start-up costs such as furniture, security deposits, and other basic needs for program participants. The remaining funds of \$70,000 will finance the lease. Based on the budget, this will cover six apartments at about \$11,666 annually per apartment.

Through a master lease, the Division would be able to serve many more program participants even though there are only six units. Part of the program design is that if participants are successful in their unit and are able to increase their income, individuals would be able to take over the lease and the Housing Division would master lease a different unit to continue to have six units available for the program. An important part of the program design is that the Division's Housing Navigators would work to place all individuals into permanent housing of their choosing as a part of program design.

Future Sustainability

Given that this is a onetime allocation of funding, DHHS would need to absorb this cost in future budgets to sustain this program. As it develops its 2021 Budget, DHHS must assess this program along with all of the other priority programs funded by tax levy. As part of its budget development, the Housing Division will also explore the possibility of leveraging other sources of funding.



Mary Jo Meyers, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

cc: County Executive Chris Abele
Sup. James Schmitt, Chair, Finance Committee
Sup. Supreme Moore-Omokunde, Chair, Health & Human Needs Committee
Raisa Koltun, County Executive's Office
Teig Whaley-Smith, DAS Director
Kelly Bablitch, County Board
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director – Comptroller's Office
Pam Matthews, Budget Analyst - DAS