



February 7, 2013

Deb Schildroth
Story County Community Services
126 South Kellogg Ave,
Ames, IA 50010

ACCESS FY14 Amended Shelter Funding Request

Dear Deb, Story County Staff, and Story County Board of Supervisors

ACCESS respectfully requests additional shelter funds in the amount of \$9,061 for fiscal year 2014. This amount, added to our current allocation of \$7,300 from Story County, will total \$16,361 in shelter funding.

As discussed in our ASSET hearing presentation, ACCESS prepared our budget request as information about state and federal victim service funding was being disseminated to victim service programs by the Iowa Attorney General's Office. This information included recommendations that each region (see attached map) provide one shelter program, one sexual assault comprehensive program, and one domestic violence comprehensive program. Our region had only met preliminarily to discuss how services would unfold.

With the uncertainty of the state and federal funds, ACCESS felt it was best to submit a budget request that reflected the intent to remain constant in all aspects of services that ACCESS currently provides. If significant changes took place, we would work with ASSET, as well as the other victim service providers, to ensure that Story County residents were served seamlessly during a transition.

As information has continued to be provided in this process, recommendations from the Attorney General's Office have become a little more flexible to programs as they plan for services. Three sources of funds will be available within each region, split evenly between shelter, domestic abuse (DA) comprehensive, and sexual abuse (SA) comprehensive services. With these funds, programs are advised to have plans to ensure that domestic violence and sexual assault services remain separate, not allowing for advocates to divide their time between domestic abuse and sexual assault. Programs are also advised to use funds in ways that reduce administrative costs, allowing for as much money as possible to be available for direct service. Programs are also strongly encouraged to engage in community organizing, connecting with community entities and professionals in order to expand the reach of victim services. This includes the use of volunteers, having a strong presence in community planning and coordination, as well as providing training to community members/professionals so that they can reach and support victims. Also, programs are advised to work at a regional level to ensure



that services across the area are consistent and mutually enhanced. As various plans have been proposed by regions, the Attorney's General's Office staff have stated that plans will be reviewed and ultimately approved or rejected based on these considerations. If a region has a plan that shows an ability to reach and serve victims well, that plan will be considered.

ACCESS is a part of a region that has come to strong agreement on its plan. From early on, Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center (Ft. Dodge) has agreed to provide the shelter program. This program has the ability to operate a 30+ bed facility. The remaining programs, ACCESS (Ames), Domestic Violence Alternatives/Sexual Assault Center (Marshalltown), and Crisis Intervention Service (Mason City) have agreed to apply for both DA and SA funds. The Mason City and Marshalltown project will divide a majority of the counties within the 20 county service area. ACCESS will cover its existing counties of Boone, Greene and Story. The decision for ACCESS to keep this area was based on the fact that ACCESS covers the only metropolitan area in the region, which included the only state university. It made sense for ACCESS to continue to specialize in this area, while the other programs reached a more rural/widespread population. Also, it made sense for all programs to keep as many of their existing counties as possible, to capitalize on ongoing support. The funding distribution between these three programs is based on population. ACCESS has 29% of the population, DVA/SAC (Marshalltown) has 44% of the population, and CIS (Mason City) has 38% of the population.

ACCESS, and the rest of the region, has plans to meet the funding expectations laid out by the Attorney General's Office. We are planning to clearly separate our DA and SA programs within each agency. Aside from administrative support, there will be no overlap of advocacy. ACCESS DA and SA advocates will have separation of space, separation of telephone lines, and separation volunteers, and separation of response and service systems. ACCESS is reducing administrative costs. ACCESS is not filling the vacant Assistant Director position in order to keep as many direct service advocates as possible. ACCESS, Mason City, and Marshalltown are making plans for regional efforts, including region-wide community assessments, region-wide staff/volunteer training, regional hotlines, and shared transportation/ service plans.

If the Attorney General's Office does not approve the plan, the region will go back to planning as a group, and resubmit our applications. Because there has been such a high level of agreement so far, we anticipate coming to consensus on plans. If ACCESS needed to withdraw either the DA or the SA application, we would work with the designated service provider (either Marshalltown or Mason City) to fulfill our commitment to provide the ASSET funded services for FY14, and support the chosen provider to become ASSET eligible in FY15.



Although we have felt confident in straying from some of the original recommendations, the region does feel that we should clearly comply with the recommendation for one *victim service funded* shelter program within our region. This has by-far been the strongest argument of the Attorney General's Office. Most of the data presented at community meetings, and ongoing conversations at the state level, has been centered around the need to limit resources committed to shelter. National models support that victim services can be strongly effective when they do not *center* their services around residential care. The North Central region feels that we need to comply with some of the recommendations to avoid jeopardizing our plans overall.

With this said, programs are clearly allowed to put local funds toward programs that their communities want to support. ACCESS has experienced great support for our shelter services, and intends to continue to provide shelter within the Story County community. We do not center our services around shelter, but instead use it as an effective compliment to the outreach services we provide. Homelessness is a significant issue in Story County, and we know that many survivors of abuse struggle with homelessness while fleeing violence or in the period following, as they strive to recover both emotionally and financially. ACCESS has a long history of providing various services successfully, demonstrating the ability to operate each with focus. Our use of volunteers is excellent, and our strong collaborative partnerships keep our individual services and systems strong.

If ACCESS' shelter services did not exist in Story County, there would be many families that would be forced to stay in an abusive situation, or would be displaced in order to reach a safe shelter. We know that the Emergency Residence Project (ERP), although competent and committed, cannot meet the emergency needs of all homeless individuals in our county. ERP's length of stay, at only two weeks, does not allow for enough time for a family or individual to recover from trauma. Families fleeing abuse need a confidentially located facility with the security features that ACCESS has.

ACCESS is in need of your additional support, but we also are committed to increasing supports from various avenues. Recently, in the current fiscal year, we are operating with a significant increase in Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds. We recently doubled this funding, and anticipate that it will continue to grow. This growth has been a community effort. Current HUD/ Emergency Shelter Grant funds have a direct connection to the community's efforts to create comprehensive emergency housing solutions. ACCESS, YSS, ERP, MICA and various other providers are very active in this effort, meet regularly, and have an active MOU for further development.

ACCESS has made a commitment to fundraising at a higher level in the next year. We anticipate reaching out to all of the communities we serve to solicit donations and to generate additional grant funds. Also ACCESS has been requesting continued support from Boone and Greene Counties. We anticipate these counties supporting their resident's use of shelter at a high level. Currently Boone



County does provide a high level of support. Greene County provides less financial support, but also has a very low rate of shelter use.

ACCESS is working to keep costs down for shelter. This upcoming year's budget includes the use of two Americorp volunteers. These Americorp volunteers are available to our agency through our relationship with the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a membership that we are able to continue. Even if the state does not fully fund either our DA or SA program, the shelter program could operate on its own budget.

Your funding in FY14, including the requested increase, will continue to be relied on in future years. As stated, we feel that the community has stated that the shelter program is a necessary service. ACCESS has a long history of utilizing funds responsibly. You can expect that the funds will be used to provide shelter bed space to Story County residents on a regular basis. Each year, with an 18 bed capacity, ACCESS can provide 6570 nights of shelter. There are instances when capacity is not reachable, such as times when a family does not fully occupy a room, or when we choose to give an individual her/his own room due to a recent trauma. Last year, 5131 nights of shelter were provided, with 3055 of those nights provided to Story County residents. This year, 1729 nights of shelter have been provided to Story County residents, signifying the potential for an increase in Story County resident usage. With funding primarily coming from local funds, ACCESS will have the ability to prioritize bed availability to local residents, and therefore it is anticipated that these numbers could increase even more.

Additionally, your funds will provide the ACCESS shelter a foundation for growth. ACCESS will continue to be a shelter program with the primary mission of serving victims of domestic violence. This makes ACCESS eligible for Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) transitional housing money. ACCESS will explore applying for these funds, as well as HUD transitional housing (Continuum of Care) funds, and other resources to aid in emergency shelter needs and access to housing in Story County.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to provide you with any additional information as you review this request.

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