

2018 - 2019
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February 6, 2019

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Dear Ms. Lomax-O'dneal,

Thank you for this opportunity to apply for Fiscal Year 2020 Direct Appropriations. We are grateful for Metro Government of Nashville & Davidson County's leadership to improve safety for victims of domestic violence.

Leaving an abuser is one of the most difficult and dangerous choices a victim of domestic violence can make. How will she get away when her abuser tracks her moves and controls her finances? Where will she go that is safe? With Metro's support, the YWCA provides 24-hour emergency shelter during this most dangerous time, and victims and their children have a safe place day and night. We have been able to safely provide this vital service through our strong partnership with Metro Office of Family Safety and Metro Nashville Police Department and ask you to continue to support this partnership with funding in FY20.

Metro's Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) continues to be a critical collaboration to provide safety to victims of domestic violence. In 2018, police officers made over 2,900 "high-danger" calls to the YWCA's 24-Hour Crisis Line to connect victims to resources. As a result, we received a record number of requests for emergency shelter, and over 25% of all admissions were from LAP's most lethal situations. To respond to this demand, in 2019 we increased the capacity of our shelter to a 65-bed facility—a 27% increase. With Metro's continued support and strategic leadership, we will serve even more victims of domestic violence this coming year through our crisis hotline and Weaver Domestic Violence Center.

Enclosed is a proposal to support these critical services. Please contact me at 615-983-5141 if you would like to discuss our plans further.

Regards,

Sharon K. Roberson
President & CEO

1. What services does your organization provide to the residents of Davidson County?

YWCA has been Nashville's primary provider of domestic violence services for over 40 years. YWCA's Domestic Violence Services help build long-term safety and self-sufficiency by offering women a continuum of services, including:

- **24-Hour Crisis and Support Helpline**

Over 7,000 calls from residents of Davidson County will be received by the YWCA's crisis line in 2019. Staffed by highly trained advocates, we offer crisis counseling and safety planning; link callers to community resources; and arrange admission to our 24-hour emergency shelter.

The YWCA's crisis line is also the central point of contact for police officers administrating the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP). For law enforcement, the LAP process begins when an officer arrives at the scene of a domestic violence call. The officer administers a short questionnaire, and if the victim's responses to the questions indicate risk of homicide according to the screen's scoring mechanism, the officer then connects the victim to a YWCA crisis counselor by calling the YWCA hotline. **The YWCA received over 2,900 "high danger" calls in 2018 from the LAP, and over 95% of callers completed a safety plan.** Safety plans help callers develop strategies meant to increase resources, and is an imperative step in safely leaving their abuser or reducing the risk of future violence.

- **65-Bed Emergency Shelter**

YWCA **Weaver Domestic Violence Center** provides 24-hour emergency shelter for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. The Weaver Center provides immediate safety for victims, and is a critical service for Metropolitan Nashville Police Department through the LAP process, as well as our local network of hospitals and social service agencies encountering victims of domestic abuse.

Leaving the relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence. They are at greatest risk of being killed or seriously injured¹. Research has also shown that **only 4%** of murder victims used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner. With over 26,000 domestic violence reports in Nashville annually, victims come in contact much more often with law enforcement. The LAP capitalizes on the contact that law enforcement has with victims in danger of intimate partner homicide, and connects them to the YWCA. **Through the LAP, an average of 25% of the Weaver Center's admissions are LAP callers and their children.** These are the highly lethal situations where safe shelter is imperative.

The Weaver Center provides a safe environment that allows survivors the opportunity to regain control of their lives and build a future free from abuse. During their 45-day stay, they access individual and group therapy, case management, children's programming and therapy, as well as resource linkages to legal assistance, employment, education, and health services.

¹ Campbell, J., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M., et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multi-site case control study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

- **Transitional Housing**

Abusers often control household finances to control the victim—credit cards and even driver licenses are withheld from the victim. For low-income victims of domestic violence, financial abuse and a history of evictions leave victims with few options for self-sufficiency. It is critical victims do not feel their only option is to return to their abuser. That is why we provide **15 households** a combination of rental assistance, case management, and therapy for up to one year. The YWCA secures over \$250,000 annually in federal grants to provide this service to Nashville residents at no cost to the victim, so that our most vulnerable victims can continue the healing they began in shelter and transition to self-sufficiency.

- **Community Support Groups**

YWCA offers support groups at the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center and the Family Safety Center. During support groups, participants learn the dynamics of domestic violence, how it impacts their lives and their children's lives, and how to cope with their current situation. Safety planning is also reinforced as a part of the group process. Safety plans may help survivors stay safe by equipping them with strategies for escaping from home or work when in danger, altering their routine, and identifying people who can offer emotional support.

2. *How many residents are you currently serving and how do they benefit?*

24-Hour Crisis and Support Helpline: Over **7,000** calls to the crisis line are received from residents of Davidson County. Over 5,200 callers that are in crisis will develop a safety plan. Safety plans help callers develop strategies meant to increase resources, and is an imperative step in safely leaving their abuser or reducing the risk of future violence.

Weaver Domestic Violence Center: In 2019, the Weaver Center expanded its capacity to 65 beds, that will provide immediate safety to over **300 adults and 200 children** annually for a total of 18,000 nights of shelter. During their 45-day stay, women and children receive food and basic living accommodations to feel safe and secure. They also receive supportive services to heal from the abuse and establish independency, including individual and group therapy from a licensed therapist; access to addiction treatment; referrals for medical, dental, and mental health care; legal advocacy (child custody, orders of protection, divorce); transportation; transitional housing planning; and support in meeting educational, employment, and financial goals. This mix of goal-setting and supportive case management allows clients the opportunity to find a job (or a new job in a location unknown to her abuser), finish her education, find safe permanent housing, or access government benefits. Approximately 55% of shelter residents exit to safe and sustainable housing after shelter by using these resources.

Transitional Housing: The YWCA partners with U.S. Department of Justice and Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs to provide the most vulnerable victims of domestic violence up to one year of continued safety and evidence-based treatment services through our housing assistance program. **15 households (30+ residents)** receive financial assistance for security deposits, rental payments, and utility assistance. These large up-front expenses are a significant

barrier to self-sufficiency. Once that barrier is removed, clients can secure new employment and work towards a successful transition into unsubsidized housing.

3. *How much funding are you requesting from Metro?*

The YWCA is requesting \$355,000 in funding to support operating costs for the **Weaver Domestic Violence Shelter** and its **24-Hour Crisis and Support Helpline**—this request is 15% of its annual domestic violence services’ budget. The request includes staff salary and benefits, program materials and supplies, specific assistance to clients for transportation, clothing, and prescriptions; professional fees such as technology support and contract staff, and occupancy expenses like telephone, electricity, gas, and building maintenance.

4. *If funding is awarded, how many additional residents will be served and how will they benefit?*

If awarded funding, the YWCA will continue to receive over 7,000 calls from residents of Davidson County to our 24-hour Crisis & Support Helpline, and the Weaver Center will continue to serve over 300 adults and over 200 children at its shelter. Approximately 25% of households entering shelter will be referred through the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), and approximately 50% of calls from Davidson County residents will be “high danger” calls through the LAP process. Adults and children will benefit through the following outcomes:

24-Hour Crisis and Support Helpline:

- 80% of callers in crisis will increase their immediate safety by developing an individualized safety plan over the phone.

Weaver Domestic Violence Center:

- 80% of adults that exit will have identified strategies for physical and emotional safety by creating a plan.
- 80% of adults that exit will have engaged in individual case management sessions achieved one or more goals from their case plans, such as legal advocacy, family therapy sessions, or securing employment.
- 80% children (over age 5) and teens in shelter who have witnessed domestic violence will have demonstrated understanding of their safety plans by role-play. Safety plans help children and teens know what to do during a domestic violence situation.
- 55% children (over age 5) and teens in shelter who have witnessed domestic violence will have shared their personal story of family violence in a group setting, which breaks down family secrets and helps end the cycle of violence.

5. *In addition to serving more residents, are there other community benefits Metro funding would help you achieve?*

Forbes magazine called domestic violence the economy’s “secret killer,” urging businesses and communities to make it a social, business and health priority. In 2013, Metro studied this economic impact to law enforcement and judicial system costs, increased healthcare costs, reduced workplace productivity, and wage losses. The Lethality Assessment Program has been an effective response for residents to have immediate, reliable, access to the 24-Hour Crisis and Support

Helpline and access to our 24-Hour emergency shelter. These services will ensure that high-risk victims receive intervention services that they may otherwise not use.

At the Weaver Center, LAP callers will continue to receive **priority** emergency shelter placements. Ultimately this will **prevent domestic violence homicides, serious injury, and re-assault by encouraging more victims to utilize the YWCA's shelter and support services.** Not only will that have a direct impact on the health of the victim, but the economic impact will be greatly diminished by stopping the cycle of abuse.

These tremendous economic and health consequences also do not even begin to illustrate the lasting impact domestic violence has on the children who witness the violence. Without intervention and treatment, the children who witness violence are more likely to have behavioral, social, cognitive, and emotional problems. For the **200+ children served by the Weaver Center**, healing from the abuse is the first step in recovering from these adverse childhood experiences. We help children feel safe and restore the children's emotional and psychological well-being, as well as strengthen the bond with their parent. We accomplish this through trauma-debriefing, individual therapy, and evidence-based intervention programs that improve children's coping skills.

6. *How would you use this funding to help create a more equitable Nashville, where all residents have an opportunity to participate in the city's success?*

Fulfilling its mission of empowering women, the YWCA equips survivors with skills, resources, and economic opportunities to build futures free from abuse. Financial abuse is a common tactic used by abusers to gain power and control in a relationship. Abusers control their victim's finances, do not allow them to work, and isolate them from family and the community around them. It is one of the most powerful methods of keeping a survivor trapped in an abusive relationship and deeply diminishes the victim's ability to live independently. For low-income victims of domestic violence, financial abuse and a history of evictions leave victims with few options for self-sufficiency. It is critical victims do not feel their only option is to return to their abuser.

We see these trends in our shelter, where over 75% of the 300 women served at the Weaver Domestic Violence Center are unemployed, and 95% are low-income. That is why our advocates work to empower survivors by establishing employment, accessing mainstream benefits, repairing credit, and securing affordable housing away from their abuser. We also leverage the work of our Transitional Housing program to secure affordable housing. Our Family Learning Center—where survivors can earn their high school equivalency diploma, and work with our career developer to gain employment. Or, our Dress for Success program—where clients are provided professional attire, a network of support, and career development tools to help them thrive in work, home and community. By serving survivors in this holistic environment, the YWCA ensures Nashville provides a healthier and more equitable future for some of our city's most vulnerable citizens.

Contacts

If additional information is needed during consideration of this request, please feel free to reach out to us:

Sharon K. Roberson, President & CEO: 615-983-5141;

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