



Our vision is a community
where **all children are safe** and
free from abuse.

July 28, 2022

Dear Selection Committee:

Bivona Child Advocacy Center is pleased to provide this letter of support for Willow Domestic Violence Center's response to the Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Opportunities RFP. Willow is the only service provider licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services to provide a complete continuum of residential and non-residential services for survivors of domestic violence in Monroe County. Willow's mission is to prevent domestic violence and ensure every survivor has access to the services and supports needed along their journey to a safe and empowered life.

COVID-19 greatly impacted survivors of domestic violence in Monroe County, NY. Restrictions implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19 appear to have exacerbated an already rampant domestic violence epidemic. Instances of domestic violence increased 8.1% nationally after stay-at-home orders took effect in March 2020. Willow experienced an uptick of 18% in outreach to the 24-hour Hotline through December 2020. This increase has remained consistent through 2021 and 2022.

Over a decade's worth of research demonstrates that a Family Justice Center model – having multiple agencies “under one roof” – provides a more supportive environment for domestic violence survivors, increases efficiency in service provision and behavioral health supports, reduces survivor recantation, and increases prosecution of offenders. According to the 2021 Family Justice Center Framework Impact Report, Family Justice Centers contributed to a 90% drop in DV homicides in the City of San Diego, a 75% reduction in domestic violence homicides in Alameda County (CA), and a 51% drop in Brooklyn (NYC).

Willow's proposed Project will formally bring together a wide cross-section of agencies and systems in legal, law enforcement, medical, behavioral health and social services, tapping into and expanding on existing internal resources, programs, and initiatives in order to effectively implement a multidisciplinary center to address family violence. This Project is an innovative, long-term, and trauma-informed solution to bring back and improve Monroe County's public health and public safety.

Bivona Child Advocacy Center is a Rochester-based nonprofit serving Monroe County children and families who have been impacted by the trauma of child abuse. Bivona and Willow have a long-standing partnership providing collaborative services on behalf of children who are impacted both by child abuse and domestic violence within their family homes. Bivona and Willow staff regularly find themselves serving clients in common and have a shared goal of

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achieving safety and well-being of all family members. Bivona and Willow additionally partner in abuse prevention services in Monroe County schools and see first-hand the critical importance of a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to prevention and response services.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deb Rosen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deb Rosen, Executive Director