



The Legal Aid Society
— of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK —

July 27, 2022

Dear Selection Committee:

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY (LASROC) 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.

LASROC and Willow have worked in collaboration since the early 80s and formalized their partnership in 1995 when they jointly developed the Court Advocacy Program to holistically assist those filing for an order of protection in Family Court. Since then, LASROC and Willow have collaborated –formally and informally – on multiple projects supporting our community's coordinated response to domestic violence. LASROC is pleased to support Willow's proposed Project.

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

Sincerely,

Carla M. Palumbo, Esq.
President & CEO

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