

SUBJECT: Authorize negotiation and execution of an Agreement with ASIAN FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OF AUSTIN for an 18-month term to provide job training, financial literacy, education and basic needs services beginning January 1, 2017, in an amount not to exceed \$75,000.

AMOUNT & SOURCE OF FUNDING: Funding in the amount of \$75,000 is included in the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Operating Budget of the Health and Human Services Department.

FISCAL NOTE: There is no anticipated fiscal impact.

AGENDA CATEGORY: Health & Human Services Department

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Shannon Jones, Director, 512-972-5010; Stephanie Hayden, Deputy Director, 512-972-5017; Robert Kingham, Social Services Policy Manager, 512-972-5026; Elena Lloyd, Agenda Coordinator, 512-972-5010.

BOARDS AND COMMISSION ACTION: To be reviewed by the Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission on November 15, 2016

PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION: On September 14, 2016 Council approved Ordinance No. 20160914-001 adopting the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Operating Budget.

BACKGROUND:

Asian Family support Services of Austin (AFSSA), formerly known as SAHELI, was started in 1992 as an informal support group for Asian women living in the Austin area. AFSSA provides assistance to Asian and other immigrant families dealing with domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking. When seeking assistance from mainstream domestic violence organizations, Asian victims of domestic violence face a number of unique obstacles including cultural and language barriers or threats to immigration status and AFSSA addresses these barriers through various organizational programs.

Economic dependence is one of the major reasons why women and their children tend to stay in abusive relationships. Studies have shown a strong link between domestic violence and poverty. The Economic Empowerment Program (EEP) provided by AFSSA is designed to help individuals achieve long-term self-sufficiency after leaving an abusive home. The EEP will provide assistance and ongoing support to battered immigrant women with financial literacy, life-skills, finding employment, and learning about training and educational opportunities to help achieve goals for self-sufficiency and independence. AFSSA distinguishes itself from other domestic violence programs through its emphasis on language access and cultural competency. Within most mainstream programs there is a scarcity in language resources and culture specific advocates, which leaves a void in services for many immigrant survivors. AFSSA advocates are trained and have experience working with underserved immigrant population and are sensitive to the barriers faced by the clients they serve.

Aside from the tangible benefit of receiving skills to better improve employability, EEP clients benefit from the following:

- One-on-one service in the language that the client is more familiar, thereby reducing lost time and increases efficacy. The project staff has the support of volunteers and contract staff who speak specific languages to fully help clients delve deeply into resume writing, interviewing skills and mock interviews. Additionally, for class participants, interpreters are provided.
- Collaborations with ethnic businesses that may provide employment opportunities. Clients who are just learning English might find it hard to find employment with a large employer. These collaborations have proven very beneficial in the past.
- Focus on improving employable skills. AFSSA recognizes that the clients have to learn English and improve their educational qualifications to further their career. The project assists clients with

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registering for level appropriate ESL and computer literacy classes, identifying existing educational resources, and securing financial aid for classes.

- Life skill classes that help with assimilation into the American Workforce to ensure that clients thrive in their new lives. The life skill classes focus on housing, transportation, financial literacy and acculturation of the American workforce.

Performance Measures

Related Departmental Goal: Promote and foster increased self-sufficiency, healthy behaviors, and lifestyle among targeted populations.

Output Measure

Number of Unduplicated Clients Served 46

Outcome Measure

Percent of individuals who demonstrate improved life skills 87%