



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20180214-04c

Date: February 14th, 2018

Subject: RECOMMENDATION FOR 5 FTE APD VICTIMS' SERVICES COUNSELORS

Motioned By: Commissioner Flannery Bope

Seconded By: Commissioner Rossana Barrios

Recommendation

The Commission for Women recommends the hiring of 5 full time Victims' Services Counselors to the Victims' Services division of the Austin Police Department

Description of Recommendation to Council and Rationale:

Rationale and full recommendation are included in the longer text of this document

Vote: Passed 9-0

For: Commissioner Cuba Lewis, Commissioner Powers, Commissioner Barrios, Commissioner DeFrates, Commissioner Athar-Jogee, Commissioner Bope, Commissioner Gamble, Chair Tober, Commissioner Austen

Against:

Abstain:

Absent: Commissioner Lewis

Attest: Staff Liaison, Mary Aversa

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FIVE ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME VICTIMS SERVICES
COUNSELORS TO THE VICTIMS SERVICES DIVISION OF THE APD**

WHEREAS, The City of Austin Commission for Women (Commission for Women) serves as an advisory body to the city council and city manager concerning the hardships and struggles of women in the Austin area, and shall make recommendations designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront women in social, economic, and vocational pursuits; and

WHEREAS, City and grant-funded victim counselors are critical to APD's response to violent crime and its aftermath. However there are currently only three victims services counselors assigned to work sex crimes, despite the fact that there are an average of 25-30 reported sexual assaults occurring in Austin every month; and

WHEREAS, Direct services hours performed by these counselors include crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for the duration of the criminal justice process. Counselors provide information about crime victim rights and assistance with crime victim compensation. They also follow up with information and referrals to help victims, survivors and their families recover more quickly and completely from the effects of victimization; and

WHEREAS, It is necessary for the sustainability of the victims services program that these positions be filled with full-time employees. The average rate of pay for a temporary counselor is \$27 per hour. It is difficult to retain counselors at this rate of pay when benefits are not offered (over 30% of APD counselors keep a second job or work overtime assignments to supplement their income). It is an even greater challenge with temporary status assignments, as the counselors continue to look for a job with benefits after accepting a temp grant-funded position; and

WHEREAS, The addition of each new victim counselor will provide direct services to between 350 – 400 victims annually, depending on area of assignment; and

WHEREAS, the commission has passed recommendations on eliminating the rape kit backlog and addressing the DNA lab closure (20160810-003a: APD DNA Lab Closure); the hiring of the city manager and APD chief (20161219-003A: Candidate Requirements for the City Manager and Police Chief); and victim services recommendations in the form of Council Committee Agenda Request (20170809-003b: Request by the Commission for Women regarding survivors of sexual assault).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission for Women recommends that five full time victims services counselor positions be added to the Victim Services Division of the Austin Police Department in 2018 to build on the City of Austin's response to needs of sexual assault survivors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission for Women recommends that to help support the sustainability of the Victims Services Division of the Austin Police Department, the City of Austin will ensure the five additional victims services counselors receive all the benefits associated with full time employment, regardless of the funding source for the positions.