

**Caroline County
Board of Supervisors Agenda
Executive Summary**

Meeting Date: **January 11, 2022**

Title: **New Business – Gap Funding Emergency Request from
Empowerhouse**

(Check Mark)

<input type="checkbox"/> Consent	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed Meeting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing
<input type="checkbox"/> No Action (Information Only)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint Presentation

Summary: Attached is a request from Empowerhouse for \$3,959 in emergency gap funding from Caroline County in FY 2021/2022 and FY 2023 (through October 1, 2022) to make up for the loss of funding from a three-year U.S. Department of Justice Improved Criminal Justice Response grant. Empowerhouse is asking each Planning District 16 locality to provide gap funding in an amount based on their population and use of the applicable services.

Empowerhouse is a non-profit organization providing confidential domestic violence assistance in the city of Fredericksburg and the counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, and Caroline. These services include a free and confidential 24-hour hotline, a temporary emergency shelter, information, referrals, and advocacy.

Empowerhouse is an accredited Virginia domestic violence program funded by state and federal grants, localities in planning district 16 (to include Fredericksburg, Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George and Caroline), Rappahannock United Way, donations, and fundraising events.

The requested funds would be used in part to continue to employ a Forensic Nurse Examiner at Mary Washington Healthcare to treat, care for and collect forensic evidence from violence victims at Mary Washington Hospital and Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center.

Empowerhouse received notification that the grant would not be funded for this year in late November. A renewal application for a new grant to begin October 1, 2022 will be submitted in March.

Additional information provided by Empowerhouse is attached.

Budget Impact: The adopted FY 2021/2022 County budget already includes a contribution of \$5,000 for Empowerhouse. Any additional funds approved by the Board of Supervisors would come from the FY 2022 Undesignated General Fund Balance.

Requested Action from Board of Supervisors: Discuss and direct staff; if the Board decides to approve the request, the funds should be contingent on full funding approval from the remaining Planning District 16 localities.

Regional Funding

Amendment request for supplemental funding

Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023-

Partner Funding Application

Empowerhouse supplemental request for funding Locality Requests - 2020 FNE data and ST specific service:

	FY 2022	FY 2023	TOTAL Cost	ST Adv.	ST FNE	ST total	SP	FXBG	KG	CA
Salary	\$ 78,115.50	\$ 26,040	\$ 104,158	\$29,172	\$26,245	\$55,417	\$21,746	\$17,247	\$5,999	\$2,999
Benefits	\$ 20,730.75	\$ 6,910	\$ 27,641	\$3,647	\$8,398	\$12,045	\$6,958	\$5,519	\$1,920	\$960
TOTAL	\$ 98,846.25	\$ 32,950	\$ 131,799	\$32,819	\$34,643	\$67,462	\$28,704	\$22,766	\$7,919	\$3,959

Gap funding emergency request due to recent notification of three-year grant award end without renewal funding in the current year. Notification received in late November of non-funding this year. A renewal application in March will seek funds for new grant that would begin 10/1/2022.

How these positions have supported Stafford County and the Region:

- This US DOJ (OVW Improved Criminal Justice Response) grant awarded to Empowerhouse with Stafford County as a partner 10/1/2018.
- Stafford County did not request funding from the grant; the County partnership allowed 2 local partners to serve our community in collaboration with Stafford County Sheriff's Office and Stafford County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. Services have not yet been interrupted.

The grant paid for:

- Forensic nurse examiner at Mary Washington Healthcare (MWHC) to treat, care for, and collect forensic evidence from violence victims at MWHC emergency room and Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center. Nurses testify in court.
- Patients/victims are injured by domestic violence (DV), sexual assault (SA), or child abuse. The grant serves patients age 12 up and adults.
- .6 FTE Empowerhouse Victim Advocate at a courtesy desk in Stafford Sheriff's Office to support Stafford DV victims in their DV unit and coordinates grant activities: training, and roll out of a new pilot Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) from the Virginia Attorney General's Office.

The Forensic Nurse Examiner- specialized and certified nurses trained in forensic interviews and exams. Their expertise and specialty care sensitively treats traumatized patients injured from violence and:

- trauma informed and scientific approach to collecting evidence
- supports investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cases
- Support the safety of victims and accountability of individuals perpetrating these crimes.

From 2018-2021, through the pandemic, the **grant provided one additional nurse allowing MWHC to expand to treat patients 24/7/365** without gaps and kept MWHC from turning away these victims in our community. **This also served area law enforcement and Commonwealth's Attorneys in increasing safety in our community through the successful adjudication of these cases with the evidence to prove the violent crimes were committed.** Before the grant, our region faced:

- a crisis of reduced coverage,
- missed care,
- further traumatization of patients,
- compromised evidence and
- On-going perpetration of these crimes from the same offender.

Through the funded Stafford focused Empowerhouse Advocate at the Sheriff's Office, the grant created

- **A stronger relationship at the Stafford Sheriff's Office with Empowerhouse to care for DV victims more comprehensively in Stafford County.**

- **Advanced training** on strangulation in intimate partner violence to the entire **Stafford County Sheriff's Office and the entire Commonwealth's Attorney's Office** allowing a targeted approach to **high danger DV offenders** and a greater awareness of high risk offenders within this crime.

The Stafford Sheriff's Office and Empowerhouse are rolling out the LAP (an evidence based harm reduction practice) in Stafford as a pilot in this area. Patrol assesses each victim at the scene for high risk factors which if they result in a positive screen, the officer places a call to an Empowerhouse advocate connecting them to services immediately. **Due to the funding gap, this effort is at risk at its beginning and most needed (during the pandemic) building on years of preparation and with the full support of all parties.**

MWHC FNE number of area victims served with the grant (planned to serve 200 victims in 3 years):

- 250 in 2020
- 241 in 2021
- **609 victims served over the three year period** of the grant, October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2021

Empowerhouse .85 FTE Advocate number of Stafford County DV victims served in person with grant (more victims served via hotline by the advocate; planned to serve 300 Stafford victims in 3 years):

- 84 in 2020
- 77 in 2021
- **318 Stafford County victims were served during the three year period** of the grant.

These services proved essential during the pandemic when violence in the home increased.

The Commonwealth of Virginia is working to expand Forensic Nurse Examiner coverage; any future state or federal funding opportunities for this critical service will be pursued for continued and future need.

Negative impact on the County Offices and citizens if these services are interrupted:

This partnership with MWHC: In 2001, **the Forensic Nursing Program** began serving SA victims with evidence collection. They expanded to DV and pediatric victims in 2008. It is not funded with patient payments or reliable or comprehensive fees. This service at MWHC is a community serving initiative little known by the public while heroically and sensitively serving victims all these years and also making law enforcement and prosecution work more successfully:

- Collection of evidence for crimes of SA, DV, child abuse, strangulation, and weapon injuries
- The service was unable to keep up with the numbers in our community.
- There was an outpouring by area law enforcement and prosecutors in defense of this service to fully staff to meet demand because child victims were further traumatized and SA victims ended up in patrol cars with officers driving them to Fairfax losing an entire day of work to ensure victims get a PERK exam.
- Or worse, victims were not treated for their injuries and missed the evidence collection entirely.
- Strangulation cases were missed.
- This position allows MWHC through supplemental funding of a grant to staff at basic levels to meet the demand which unfortunately increased during the pandemic.

The Empowerhouse Advocate at the Stafford Sheriff's Office coordinated training initiatives with the Strangulation Prevention Institute and with the Virginia Attorney General's Office for the LAP. In order to be successful with the new to Stafford, LAP, operating in more than half of Virginia localities:

- The Stafford dedicated Empowerhouse Advocate based in the Sheriff's office is essential.
- Having the advocate available to law enforcement internally has supported many DV victims in their journey to end abuse in their lives.
- It also increased DV collaboration, training, and outreach in the community to support Stafford citizens.

Forensic Nurse One-Year recovery of funding:

Salary \$ 74,985.75

Benefits: \$23,994.44

Total: \$98,981.19

Empowerhouse Advocate/Coordinator based at the Sheriff's Office, .6 FTE

Salary: \$29,172 *

Benefits: \$3,646.50

**Not requesting .3 FTE of the .9 FTE staffing part of the grant funding which formerly was funded*

Needs in numbers: 429 PD16 originated cases

Locality	MWHC 2020 Cases	MWHC 2019 Cases	Empowerhouse DV Services 2020	Empowerhouse DV Services 2019	Total 2019 Population
Stafford County	152	125	946	986	152,882
Spotsylvania County	123	111	1,113	1,035	136,215
Fredericksburg City	100	100	834	738	29,036
Westmoreland County	21	8			18105
Other/Courtesy/unknown	51	53	373	313	
King George County	35	21	215	205	28,836
Caroline County	19	20	130	176	30,725
Prince William -zip- 22025, 22026, 22122	16	4			33680
Culpeper County	9	17			
Orange County- zip 22508, 22567	13	13			10,340
Louisa County	4	0			
Fauquier	4	8			71,222
Total	547	531	3,611	3,453	511,041

The following table shows MWHC data during a difficult time of low FNE coverage demonstrating drop in cases and exams performed due to reduced availability of FNEs in 2017. The new grant was written in 2018.

Type of Case	2020 Cases	2019 Cases	2017 Cases	2016 Cases	2015 Cases
Sexual Assault Exams (including associated follow-up)	282	270	96	135	129
Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence Exams	59	43	8	29	34
Trauma Exams (gunshot/mvc/od's, etc.)	39	6	19	57	43
Child Physical Abuse/Neglect Exams	36	40	14	19	14
Sub-Total --Exams	416	359	137	240	220
Elder Abuse	8	1	2	2	5
Miscellaneous Physical Assaults, Burns, etc.	2	8	3	8	19
Remaining**	121	91	266	281	277
TOTAL CASES	547	480	408	531	527

**Remaining cases are comprised of both bed side and phone consultations. COC (Chain of Custody) blood draws, interview attendance as part of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), witnesses, etc.