

**COUNTY OF SONOMA
AGENDA ITEM
SUMMARY REPORT**

Clerk of the Board Use Only
Meeting Date: _____ Held Until: _____
Agenda Item No: _____ Agenda Item No: _____

Department: Probation

() 4/5 Vote Required

Contact:
Robert Ochs

Phone:
(707) 565-2732

Board Date:
05/12/09

Deadline for Board Action:

AGENDA SHORT TITLE:
Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program Contract

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION:

Authorize the Chief Probation Officer, on behalf of the County, to sign a contract for a term to begin on July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010, and any amendments or extension that do not significantly change the contract content, with the Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program in the amount of \$153,200, maintaining FY 08-09 levels of funding.

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT

EXPENDITURES

ADD'L FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL

Estimated Cost

\$153,200

Contingencies
(Fund Name:)

Amount Budgeted

\$153,200

Unanticipated Revenue
(Source:)

Other Avail Approp
(Explain below)

Other Transfer(s)
(Source:)

Additional Requested:

\$0

Add'l Funds Requested:

Explanation (if required): Amount budged/estimated cost is based on the proposed budget for FY 08/09.

Prior Board Action(s):

- 06/10/08 Approved Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program Contract
- 4/10/07 Approved Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program Contract
- 8/17/06 Approved Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program Contract
- 7/12/05 Approved Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program Contract

Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval:

Referral services will not be provided resulting in increased costs to the justice system.

BACKGROUND:

The Probation Department is requesting the Board to approve the continuation of the Volunteer Center-Court Referral Program contract for fiscal year 2008/2009, which provides essential services to the Court, the justice system and the community.

The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County administers the Adult and Juvenile Court Referral Program, which offers a sentencing option as an alternative to detention, in the form of community service work for adults and juveniles referred from Sonoma County criminal, traffic and civil courts. This option is used for adults who cannot afford to pay a court imposed fine, for whom a fine or jail appears inappropriate or where community service work is a mandated condition of sentence or diversion. In FY 09-10, the Volunteer Center anticipates working with 5,800 referrals to the program, 4,000 of whom will interviewed and assigned to do community service by the courts. Historically, 80% of clients interviewed complete all of their assigned hours of work, resulting in approximately 140,000 annual hours of skilled and unskilled labor in community agencies (assumes an average of 35 hours of work completed per client), with an estimated minimum value of \$1,400,000 (valued at \$10 per hour).

Initially, the Court managed the contract with the Volunteer Center directly. In FY 04-05 the funding was shifted to the Probation Department, with an adjustment to Probation's budget; however, no additional funding has been provided to Probation to allow the Department to provide the center with more funding to handle the increase of clients. Probation has increased the contract amount commensurate with the percentage of increases to the County's overall budget, which has failed to keep pace with the increases in referrals. Since FY 04-05, contract funding has increased by 26% while interviews and referrals have increased by 49% & 47%, as described above. For FY 08-09, the Volunteer Center contract amount included \$153, 200, an 11% increase from FY 07-08. This increase was necessary to allow the Volunteer Center to augment staffing from 4.3 FTEs to 5.4 FTEs. The increased staffing resulted in the addition of one caseworker to address the significant increase of referrals and interviews, and a slight increase to hours for the administrative assistant position to handle the paperwork associated with each client.

For FY 09-10, the Volunteer Center is proposing no increase to the FY-08-09 contract funding levels. The Center will serve the additional client interviews and referrals, despite no increase to the contract, by keeping the salaries and benefits of their employees at FY 08-09 rates and

Attachments: None

On File With Clerk: Agreement for Funding of Community Program: Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote:

BACKGROUND:

eliminating all money in their budget associated with training and conferences for their staff. Additionally, in October 2008, the Volunteer Center increased fees charged to clients, to help cover the costs of the additional caseworker position.

If the FY 09-10 Volunteer Center contract is approved by the Board, the community will benefit from thousands of hours of skilled and unskilled labor, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars for the community. Furthermore, the Volunteer Center contract saves the Court, Jails, and Probation staff significant time and resources. If the Volunteer Center became unavailable, the Court would be forced to refer clients to the Probation Department or to detention facilities, or to no consequences at all, thus creating significant stress on the system.

Additionally, the Volunteer Center expands the sentencing options for the Courts, decreasing the need to depend on other alternatives such as fines or incarceration. Assignment to unpaid work in community agencies gives the Courts a restorative sentencing sanction that is both punitive to the offender and beneficial to the community. Enabling offenders to meet their obligation to the Courts by performing a useful service to the community may instill a sense of pride and community in offenders, and could potentially result in a lower likelihood for re-offense.

Requested Board Action:

Authorize the Chief Probation Officer, on behalf of the County, to sign a contract for a term to begin on July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010, and any amendments or extension that do not significantly change the contract content, with the Volunteer Center – Court Referral Program in the amount of \$153,200, maintaining FY 08-09 levels of funding.