



HAVEN • HELP • HOPE

April 30, 2020

Chief Todd Thomas
Appleton Police Department
222 S. Walnut Street
Appleton, WI 54911

Re: Victim Services Officer position

Dear Chief Thomas:

It is with great pleasure that we write this letter of support for the Appleton Police Department to add a new Victim Services Officer position.

Domestic violence calls are some of the most dangerous and complex situations that police officers respond to while in the line of duty. As advocates at Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs, we know that the most dangerous time for victims of domestic violence is when they are leaving or after they have left the abusive relationship. We also know that danger is heightened when victims report domestic abuse and cooperate with the criminal justice system. Therefore, the Appleton Police Department is typically part of this heightened dangerous time.

In 2019, 637 unduplicated individual adults sought out legal advocacy at Harbor House. Clients reach out to our Legal Advocacy program for support and assistance when they are working within the civil system, criminal system or family court system or are involved in these systems simultaneously. Our intervention program saw 219 domestic violence offenders for assessments in 2019. Almost all of those individuals were arrested for domestic violence with cases in the criminal justice system.

For many years, Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs has had an officer designated as our liaison with the Appleton Police Department. The liaison officer participates in our Outagamie County Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT). This team brings criminal justice players together to collaborate on domestic violence issues that focus on victim safety and offender accountability.

The liaison is also a member of the DVIT board. The board is made up of a smaller team of individuals who help to set the agenda for our monthly intervention team meetings as well as provide expertise, do needed research and project planning.

The liaison is also called upon by Harbor House for other reasons such as to meet with victims at the program for assistance with enhanced safety planning, filing of a report, providing further

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investigation and follow up on initial reports which could include additional statements and follow up photos.

The liaison provides valuable assistance to program staff with respect to safety concerns that arise at Harbor House especially when perpetrators of violence are threatening via the phone or on site.

The liaison is also extremely beneficial within the police department for fellow officers in enhancing communication with our program, to provide training for officers on the issue of domestic violence and to build sensitivity and understanding of crime victim trauma. Other key functions of this liaison is to train officers on providing thorough investigations, oversee good report writing to ensure successful prosecution and to assist with the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP).

LAP is the homicide prevention program implemented in Outagamie County in recent years. The LAP consists of 11 questions that officers ask victims of domestic violence who are believed to be in high danger. When victims do score high danger, the officer immediately connects that individual with Harbor House to discuss safety planning.

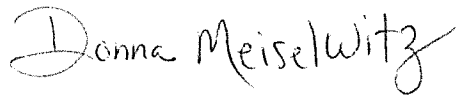
We are fortunate to have a strong working relationship with the Appleton Police Department and appreciate the sensitivity and understanding of trauma and domestic violence when working with crime victims. We can easily see having a full time officer as a Victim Services Officer instead of an officer who is trying to do patrol and liaison work at the same time. Having a full time individual could also help us to expand our collaboration between victim services and law enforcement which would benefit crime victims of domestic violence.

It is our hope that the Appleton Police Department will be supported in adding the Victim Services Officer position to provide justice and accountability for the crime victims and citizens of Appleton in Outagamie County.

Sincerely,



Wendy Gehl
Director of Program Services
Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs



Donna Meiselwitz
Legal Advocate
Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs