

LOUISIANA BAR FOUNDATION
administrator of:
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA)
Child in Need of Care (CINC)

GRANT OVERSIGHT REPORT

Grantee: Family Violence Program of St. Bernard

On-Site Date: Thursday, December 2, 2021; 9:00 a.m.

The objectives of the site visit were to provide grant oversight in the following manner:

1. Assess the grantee's compliance with the grant requirements contained in the grant agreements;
2. Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the grantee's operations and services;
3. Assess the accuracy of information provided in the grant application and quarterly reports; and
4. Provide technical assistance and recommendations to encourage compliance and improve the grantee's services and operations.

GOVERNANCE

Observations/Recommendations:

- The organization has no formal orientation for board members. *Recommendation is to provide some type of orientation annually.*
- Organization is lax on reviewing policies annually with Board members. *Recommendation is to review policies annually.*
- The Executive Director notifies the Board when complaints/grievances come in.
- The Board approves all policies and procedures.
- The budget is prepared by the Executive Director and approved by the Board.
- There are no standing committees.
- The ED is formally evaluated by the Board annually.
- The ED does not feel that she is given too much independence from the Board; feels they are accessible, and she is comfortable communicating with them when needed.
- There is a client grievance policy that all survivors are given upon arrival.
- The 990 indicates several missing policies, despite ED saying the organization does have various policies. 990 needs to be reviewed more thoroughly for errors and missing information. As it currently stands, the 990 doesn't indicate that a Board member reviews it. *Recommendation is to change the 990 review policy to ensure 990 is thoroughly and accurately reviewed for any errors.*
- The organization is currently trying to recruit an attorney to the Board and would like to have more diversity (race, gender, age).

- Board member terms are 4 years long; a board member must rotate off before serving a second 4 year term.
- The current Board President has been in the position for 5 years and the ED doesn't seem to know why.
- Board meetings are held frequently and notification is sent via e-mail.
- There are no standing agendas for any Board meeting. *Recommendation is to keep an agenda for each meeting.*
- In terms of charitable gaming, there is question on what the money is allocated to. At the moment, it doesn't seem to be allocated for anything. Also of concern is the fact that no Board members are named on the account, only the ED and Grants Manager.
- There is currently no succession plan, which has been mentioned in past grant application evaluations but not created.
- *Recommend cross-staff training in case a staff member went out abruptly so that their responsibilities would not be interrupted.*

QUALITY CONTROL

Observations/Recommendations:

- The new legal/court advocate seems very experienced; asset to the program.
- Performance reviews are done annually; after 3 months and then 6 months for new staff members.
- Cases are assigned based on need of survivor and which case manager is best suited.
- ED feels program has adequate resources, especially with influx of funding due to COVID; however ED indicates the program is lacking in terms of personnel.
- New legal/court advocate will take over grant reporting once trained (been with program just a few months). ED seems unclear on which agencies program is reporting to (state vs. federal).

INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

Observations/Recommendations:

- Using Empower software for case management.
- Files are kept in filing cabinets with locks; ED and Grants Manager have keys.
- There is no conflicts file as it hasn't been needed; files are cross referenced in Empower to determine is an abuser is involved in more than one active case.
- Shared calendars are used as a tickler system to ensure deadlines are met/appearances assured.
- Program provides several types of follow up to ensure survivors are reminded of their deadlines and court appearances.
- Eligibility is based on criteria set by DCFS: survivor of domestic violence.
- Clients are kept well-informed of status and progress of their case.

CLIENT ACCESS

Observations/Recommendations:

- The office is accessible and is on a public bus line on Judge Perez. The facility has ample free parking within its secure boundaries. It is wheelchair accessible and one of the residential units is designed for persons with disabilities. An elevator is also available. It is accessible to the blind (though they have no memory of a blind survivor seeking services). The hotline is accessible to the deaf. Survivors come in a variety of ways – bus, car, walking to the gate. The program has also offered taxis and ride shares to those who need it. They have also had Sheriff's officers transport survivors to the facility.
- The shelter is in service, however heavy damage was sustained during Hurricane Ida and it will take some time to complete all of the necessary repairs.
- The shelter is clean and physically comfortable; also provides suitable space for children, including a playground.
- The facility is accessible 24/7/365.
- The program distributes fliers within the Parish and provides information/training sessions for the community as forms of outreach and publicity.
- Written materials are available in English and Spanish, however, the program sees a very high number of Arabic survivors. There are no materials yet. *Recommend seeking funds from the CPP for material translating services for survivors.*
- While the program doesn't employ a staff who can communicate with non-English speaking clients, they call in translators when they are needed.
- Most clients are referred to SLLS, which has bilingual capacity. When survivors are not eligible for SLLS services, the program calls pro bono attorneys.

COMPLIANCE WITH FOUNDATION REQUIREMENTS

Observations/Recommendations:

- Program is currently in compliance with conditions of the LBF grant agreement.
- They do not provide legal assistance with respect to criminal proceedings, nor do they take any fee generating cases.
- The program does provide services to survivors above the poverty level; but it is minimal, less than 5% of survivors.

FINANCIAL

Observations/Recommendations:

- Currently 2 checking accounts; one specifically for charitable gaming.
- A second building was purchased with unrestricted funds from the charitable gaming funds; will function as outreach office.
- Bank statements are reconciled by outside third party who also does preliminary audit work.
- Bank reconciliations are reviewed by ED and Grants Manager; approved by ED.

- IOLTA disbursements are allocated and tracked through QuickBooks.
- No limits on direct deposit amounts.
- Payroll is managed internally by Grants Manager.

STATE-WIDE SUPPORT ATJ PROJECTS/CENTERS

Observations/Recommendations:

- The program has just started connecting with ATJ, under the new legal/court advocate.
- Program regularly communicates with other DV programs.
- Works with LCADV for training, tech assistance, grant assistance and attend quarterly meetings.