




MEMORANDUM

Date: August 12, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Allocation of \$1 Million in American Rescue Plan Act Funds to Expand Shelter Capacity for Domestic Violence Victims**

At the August 10, 2021 Board of Supervisor's meeting the Board approved the spending plan for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF) allocation with the understanding that individual programming and expenditures of those funds would be separately presented for approval. A portion of the planned Public Health spend includes monies to provide capital investments to address primary and secondary effects of the pandemic including domestic violence response.

Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse (Emerge), our region's dedicated Domestic Violence (DV) provider, presented the County with an opportunity to partner with the Connie Hillman Family Foundation and the City of Tucson to expand its existing emergency shelter capacity in a way that also addresses the challenges and dangers of providing DV services in a communal living setting during a pandemic. Emerge proposes to renovate its existing emergency shelter facility, at a total cost of \$3.5 million, to provide non-congregate housing each with their own bathrooms and kitchenettes, which will nearly double these shelter capacity.

The Connie Hillman Family has agreed to contribute \$1,000,000 toward the proposed renovation if the County and the City of Tucson, combined, invest \$2,000,000 in the project. Emerge will contribute the remaining \$500,000 through community fundraising efforts.

The ARPA funds allocated to the Behavioral Health Department will be utilized to fund the County's \$1,000,000 investment and is recommended for approval by that department. Please see the attached memorandum from Paula Perrera, Behavioral Health Department Director.

I recommend the Board approve \$1,000,000 of the ARPA/CLFRF funds to be expended on the renovation and expansion of the existing Emerge emergency shelter and direct staff to

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

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develop an appropriate contract to effect this transfer of funds, provided the City of Tucson also provides this amount.

I will place an item on the agenda of September 7, 2021 for direction from the Board on this matter.


CHH/dym

Attachment

c: Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Paula Perrera, Director, Pima County Behavioral Health

Date: August 11, 2021

To: C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

From: Paula Perrera, 
Behavioral Health Director

Re: Investment in Renovating Emerge's Emergency Shelter

Background

At its August 10, 2021 meeting the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved the spend plan for the \$203,421,668 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF) monies. Included in the \$125,210,131 Public Health spend plan are monies to provide capital investments to address primary and secondary effects of the pandemic including domestic violence (DV) response.

The pandemic has taught us many hard lessons and shone a bright light on the gaps and frailties in our social safety net programming. COVID has had a particularly devastating impact on victims of domestic violence as incidents of abuse have risen, while the ability to reach out for help has been severely hampered by the increased amount of time victims and their abusive partners are at home together as well as the real fear of contracting the virus in pursuit of safety. For victims that are able to escape the danger of their homes, the challenge of providing quality emergent service is exacerbated by the need to accommodate social distancing and provide quarantine and isolation spaces due to COVID.

Pima County has a long history of collaborating with Emerge to address the epidemic of DV. Partnerships between Emerge and the Pima County Behavioral Health Department, County Attorney's Office, and Adult Probation have strengthened the community's DV response system, including the Arizona intimate Partner Risk Assessment Instrument System (APRAIS) protocol. APRAIS was developed to identify DV victims at the greatest risk of lethality in an attempt to stem the rate of DV-related deaths in our community. Our law enforcement partners utilize the APRAIS protocol to immediately identify and refer victims to assistance during their call response. This past year the Pima County Sheriff's Department referred 526 victims to Emerge representing 24% of all APRAIS referrals while the Tucson Police Department referred another 1,490 or 70%.

Current Facilities and Challenges

Emerge's current shelter facility includes 51 beds using a communal living model (shared bedrooms, bathrooms, dining room, kitchen, etc.). Communal living is challenging under the best of circumstances, but is particularly stressful for people who are perhaps in the most vulnerable state of their lives, and potentially dangerous during a pandemic. The challenges of 50+ adults and children – each dealing with extreme crisis and trauma – living in a communal setting can easily distract and derail victims from being able to focus on healing and finding a way forward. For the most vulnerable DV victims, emergency shelter may be the only option for escaping the violence in their home/intimate relationship, and Emerge's shelter is the only one in our community specializing in the trauma and safety considerations for DV victims. With demand far exceeding current capacity, Emerge's shelter prioritizes serving those at the greatest risk of being seriously injured or killed.

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When the pandemic began, it was impossible to adequately mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within a communal facility so Emerge moved all shelter participants to hotel rooms in July 2020, and has been exclusively operating their shelter program out of a hotel ever since. This move has all but eliminated the spread of COVID-19 within the program. Since July 2020 (through March 2021), Emerge has served 365 victims and families in the contracted hotel space, for an average of 20 days per stay. However, such a model is not sustainable for many reasons including the dramatic increase in operational cost which will cause current funding to be exhausted by the summer of 2022.

Emerge has long desired to increase the number of victims it can shelter and has investigated and studied various models to achieve that goal. After having considered all available options the most economically viable plan involves renovating the existing shelter, which they own, at a total cost of \$3.5 million.

Recently, the Connie Hillman Family Foundation (a local private foundation) agreed to contribute \$1 million toward this \$3.5 million renovation if the County and City, combined, will invest \$2 million in the project. Emerge will cover the remaining \$500,000 through community fundraising efforts.


The proposed renovations to Emerge's existing shelter, will allow Emerge to increase the number of DV victims and their children who can be sheltered in our community. The facility's current 13 units (which serve 20-25 households and a maximum of 51 people) will be expanded to 28 non-congregate rooms, each with their own bathroom and kitchenette. This will permit up to 42 households (approximately 84 people) to be sheltered on any given night, and is estimated to result in 700+ unduplicated people be served each year. This will greatly reduce the 25-30 people currently being turned away each week due to capacity limitations. Beyond increased numbers served, this change is expected to increase the positive outcomes for shelter residents by reducing communal living challenges, and allowing more time to be spent addressing trauma and taking the practical steps needed to live a life free from abuse.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Sadly, DV takes the lives of far too many Pima County residents – our loved ones, friends, coworkers and neighbors – year after year. While Emerge is our regional dedicated DV service provider, DV is a community issue that requires a community solution. The County's partnership and investment in the renovation of Emerge's emergency shelter into a non-congregate facility will result in systemic infrastructure improvements that will forever change the landscape of victim services in Pima County.

I recommend approval of \$1,000,000 of the ARPA/CLFRF funds to be expended on the renovation of the existing Emerge emergency shelter.

Concur:



Francisco Garcia, Deputy Administrator &
Chief Medical Officer



Date

PJP/ag

Cc: Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy Administrator