

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

WHEREAS, **Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office, Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office Victims' Assistance Program, Baldwin County Board of Commissioners, Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, Milledgeville Police Department, Georgia College and State University Police Department, Circle of Love Center, INC., Baldwin County Department of Family & Children Services, Judicial Alternatives of Georgia, and The Bright House** have come together to collaborate; and

WHEREAS, the partners herein desire and acknowledge that the SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office strives to provide the most thoughtful, timely, and comprehensive services to victims of crime. Therefore, those same noted partners enter into this Memorandum of Understanding setting forth the relationships and services further ensuring the greatest care and access for victims:

I) DESCRIPTION OF PARTNER AGENCIES

SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office

SAFE operates from within the Office of the Solicitor General, Baldwin County, Georgia. The Solicitor General for Baldwin County, Skye Gess, was appointed in 2018 and serves as a full-time Solicitor for Baldwin County. Prior to the Solicitor General's appointment, Mrs. Maxine Blackwell had served as the Solicitor General since 1992. The Solicitor's Office is responsible for prosecuting approximately two-thousand warrant cases each year that have an underlying victim as well as another six-thousand traffic offenses each year. SAFE provides advocacy and support to victims of crime prosecuted by the Solicitor's Office and also implements programs and activities that assist victims and raise public awareness to victims' rights and the importance of victim service programs.

Since the Office of the Solicitor General prosecutes 76% of all crime cases and 82% of all domestic violence cases made by officers each year, and since these cases are misdemeanor in nature, victim advocacy programs for misdemeanor victims of crime provide a unique opportunity that is not available at the felony level. Victims seen in the Office of Solicitor General have an opportunity to change their lives and protect their children before the felonious assault (shooting, stabbing) occurs, before the rape is committed, before the victim is killed. While much attention and funding is spent each year on felony crime (and necessarily so), it is at the misdemeanor level that advocates and prosecutors have an opportunity to make a real difference in victims' lives before it is too late. This opportunity is especially present in the more than 1,000 victims of domestic violence who seek assistance from SAFE each year.

In order to meet the needs of these victims and in order to offer programs and service aimed at preventing future assault on the hundreds of victims assisted by SAFE Program each year, SAFE provides emergency services, support programs, and community outreach projects. SAFE advocates provide a 24 hour per day on-call hotline to victims seeking assistance and to officers seeking information or guidance. SAFE advocates provide temporary protective order services to the community and surrounding counties, participate in training of law enforcement officers, speak at local businesses, civic organizations, churches, high schools, middle schools, and youth camps on domestic abuse issues, sponsor an annual candlelight vigil and an annual domestic violence awareness walk. SAFE has implemented and facilitate a highly successful battered women's educational program (In Our Best Interest).

The Baldwin County Board of Commissioners

The Baldwin County Commissioners are elected every four years. One commissioner serves each of the County's five districts with the Chairperson elected by the Board. The Commissioner's Office has been responsible for the admission of the SAFE Program grant.

Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office

The Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office prosecutes felony and misdemeanor cases in an eight county judicial circuit which includes Baldwin County. The District Attorney's Office also provides services to victims of crime. The Baldwin County Office employs victim advocates providing assistance to victims through advocacy services, and assistance through the Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Domestic Violence Task Force.

Baldwin County Sheriff's Office

The Baldwin County Sheriff's Office is a state certified agency consisting of 154 employees, 59 of whom are sworn law enforcement officers. It has been in existence and serving the citizens of Baldwin County since 1887. The Sheriff's Office offers a broad range of law enforcement services, such as Judicial Security, Summons Service, Warrant Service & Fugitive Retrieval, Prisoner Transportation, and Landlord/Tenant Services but their primary purpose is to uphold the laws of the jurisdiction, provide patrol, and investigate local crimes, such as domestics, rapes, suicides, child neglect, child abuse, assist with death notifications, and homicides, and if needed, transportation to shelters. The Criminal Investigation Division (C.I.D.) is responsible for conducting follow-up investigations regarding calls for service from the public.

Milledgeville Police Department

The Milledgeville Police Department consists of 67 employees, 42 of which are sworn police officers. The department is a progressive law enforcement agency and earned state certification in 2001 by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. The department is 1 of only 76 agencies that have achieved this distinction in Georgia. Sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking are investigated by the Criminal Investigation Division. The Criminal Investigation Division (C.I.D.) is tasked with follow-up investigations into all criminal cases occurring within the city of Milledgeville. C.I.D. strives to thoroughly and professionally investigate all unsolved crimes occurring within its jurisdiction. C.I.D. is also responsible for identifying and apprehending offenders; recovering lost or stolen property; documenting, gathering, and evaluating evidence regarding criminal activity; and assisting in the prosecution of those charged with criminal offenses.

Georgia College and State University Police Department

Georgia College and State University Police Department employees sworn police officers and administrative staff. GC&SU Police Department enforces state laws and local ordinances. The department is responsible for several critical functions including communications center, staff, records, training, and crime prevention. Additionally, GC&SU Police Department administers Student Night Auxiliary Program (SNAP) assisting college students with safe transportation at night.

Judicial Alternatives of Georgia (JAG)

JAG is a privately owned and managed probation company providing services to more than forty courts and supervising over 15,000 misdemeanor offenders. They currently have offices throughout the state of Georgia and in Florida. Their mission is to positively impact the community and provide the highest quality services to the courts, victims and offenders by employing professional staff, enforcing court orders, offering accurate and reliable information, providing recommendations to the court and facilitating rehabilitation of offenders. In addition, they offer offenders a domestic violence program, a "*Paths to Change*" Responsible Behavior program, and an Anger Management program.

Circle of Love Center, INC.

The Circle of Love is a non-profit organization located in Greensboro, Georgia which is funded by local, state, and federal grants, as well as community contributions. Their goal is to provide crisis intervention, comprehensive services, support, and safe shelter for victims of violent crimes, including sexual assault and domestic violence, and to educate the community about the cycle of violence and prevention thereof. The Circle of Love provides crisis intervention, advocacy and follow up services for those affected by sexual violence and domestic violence. Their team is comprised of trained staff and volunteer advocates who are on-call 24 hours a day to assist those affected by sexual violence and domestic violence. They work with the justice system, the medical community and other public & private agencies to provide need-based services to sexual assault survivors. Their shelter program addresses the problem of women and children displaced by domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence often find themselves homeless and in continued danger through no fault of their own, but as a result of their attempts to escape the violence. The Circle of Love serves these individuals at risk for domestic violence and domestic violence homicide. In addition to physical abuse most have also suffered from financial abuse, many are victims of generational poverty, and many suffer mental health issues due to prolonged trauma caused by intimate partner violence.

Department of Family & Children Services

The Baldwin County Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) are the part of Department of Human Services that investigates child abuse; finds foster homes for abused and neglected children; helps low income, out-of-work parents get back on their feet; assists with childcare costs for low income parents who are working or in job training; and provides numerous support services and innovative programs to help troubled families. For victims of domestic violence and child sexual assault, they offer individual and family counseling and temporary financial assistance. The Department of Family & Children Services also offers referrals on an as-needed basis.

The Bright House

Established in 2018, The Bright House provides a safe location for victims of sexual assault to come for one on one attention immediately after a crisis. The victim and their non-offending family members receive support, crisis intervention, and resource referrals for mental health, medical treatment, and additional services, if needed. Their main objective is to reduce trauma to victims by providing a safe, comfortable location while ensuring all of their medical and emotional needs are met.

II) HISTORY OF RELATIONSHIP

The Baldwin County Board of Commissioners

The Baldwin County Board of Commissioners has worked in collaboration with the Solicitor General's Office for over twenty years by administering grants for the SAFE Program. The Commissioner's Office has assisted in the allocation and distribution of grant funds allowing the Solicitor General's Office to focus on victim services without the cost of employing a financial administrator.

Ocmulgee District Attorney's Office

The Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit is the 2nd largest judicial circuit in the State of Georgia. The Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Victim Advocate Program offers essential, direct services to victims such as accompanying victims to the hospital, emergency assistance, referral counseling, orientation to criminal justice system, court escort, crisis intervention, defendant arrest and bond status, case status and disposition information, contact persons within the judicial system, restitution claims, temporary protective orders, intervention on behalf of victim with employers or school personnel to explain absences or behavior changes, and Victim of Crime claims assistance. The Solicitor General's Office's and District Attorney's Office's prosecutors, victim advocates, and investigators meet on an as needed basis.

One of the basic needs of this collaboration is to have more consistent communication with the Solicitor General's Office and this need will be met through the Circuit Domestic Violence Task Force. Long-term goals of this collaboration include streamlining victim assistance within Baldwin County by creating joint support for our groups and victim service opportunities in our State Courts and Superior Courts.

Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, Milledgeville Police Department, Georgia College and State University Police Department

The above listed law enforcement agencies and SAFE Program work closely to ensure the laws of the State of Georgia are upheld and that our community is protected. The Solicitor General's Office has authority over all misdemeanor prosecutions occurring in the County. Some misdemeanor traffic offenses prosecuted by the Milledgeville Police Department will be handled through Municipal Court but may be transferred to State Court. The Solicitor General's Office employs victim advocates specialized in the prosecution of all types of criminal conduct, including battery, assault, theft cases and domestic violence crimes. The sheriff offices and police departments in Baldwin County have a long standing working relationship and collaborate on a daily basis to ensure the adequate and appropriate execution in the prosecution of misdemeanor status cases.

Judicial Alternative of Georgia (JAG)

JAG serves to develop strategies to reduce the incident of recidivism in the local community, develop a partnership with local community programs to meet specific needs of offenders in the areas of substance abuse or mental health counseling, adult literacy, job placement, victim assistance, and other needs identified by the court. All services are provided at no cost to the contracting city or county, or its tax payers.

A critical need of this collaboration is to ensure that victims receive notification of the legal status, location, and/or supervision requirements of the perpetrator. This information can be of critical importance in helping victims make decisions about their personal safety and their lives. This need will continue to be met through the initiation and expansion of Domestic Violence Task Force. Long-term goals of this collaboration include developing victim notification and informational services, including the agency's communications with the victim and with the victim services community.

Circle of Love Center, INC.

The Circle of Love Center and the SAFE Program have been in collaboration for more than 15 years. They offer victims and children of domestic violence emergency shelter and support services. In addition to shelter services they provide a 24-hour crisis hotline, legal advocacy, emergency client assistance, and training on domestic violence awareness.

Baldwin County Department of Family & Children Services

The Department of Family & Children Services' (DFCS) and the SAFE Program have worked together since 1991. DFCS' services are free and private. They are available regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, income, disability, or sexual orientation. Their services are available even if the victim chooses not to leave the abuser. Several of our DFCS provide crisis intervention and support services to adult victims of domestic violence and their children, 24 hours a day, 7-days a week. Services include emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis and information hotline, safety planning, counseling, case management, child assessments, information and referrals, education for community awareness, and training for law enforcement and other professionals. Additional services that may be offered are legal and court advocacy, transportation, relocation assistance, life skills training, transitional housing, daycare, outreach services, rape crisis intervention, and prevention programs in local schools.

The Bright House

The SAFE Program and The Bright House began working together in 2018. Together we will continue to unite care for victims of sexual battery and domestic violence to reduce trauma experienced by adult, adolescent, and child victims of abuse and their non-offending family members by providing an environment in which they can receive all needed services and by facilitating a comprehensive multidisciplinary team approach to the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and child abuse.

IV) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby agreed by and between the partners as follows:

1. The SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office in collaboration with our partners will provide (or make available): 1) education for victims, law enforcement, and the community on the issues of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. And 2) training for law enforcement officers and staff of Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Victim Assistance Program (OJC-VAP) on dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
2. The SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office and the Baldwin County Board of Commissioners will continue to work together ensuring that all 5% and VOCA funds are used to support and maintain services for victims of crime.
3. The SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office and the OJC-VAP will collaborate in the following manner: 1) creating and maintaining protocols for responding to victims of domestic violence and stalking and 2) creating and maintaining training for law enforcement and social service agencies.
4. The SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office and our law enforcement agencies (Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, Milledgeville Police Department and Georgia College & State University Police Department) will work together in the prosecution of misdemeanor cases. Law enforcement agrees to work with the SAFE Program to formalize protocols to develop cross agency coordination and communication. They will work collaboratively throughout the community to ensure that victims of crime are treated with dignity and respect while pursuing safety and confidentiality at all levels. They will ensure that victims are referred to and/or contacted by the SAFE Program in a supportive, confidential manner.
5. The Circle of Love Center, Inc. will work in collaboration with the SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office to provide assistance with Temporary Protective Orders. They also agree to assist to formalize protocols to develop cross agency coordination and communication. The Circle of Love Center will assist in providing training for victims, local law enforcement agencies, and social services.
6. Judicial Alternatives of Georgia agrees to work with the SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office to formalize protocols to develop cross agency coordination and communication. Judicial Alternatives of Georgia will work especially close with the Solicitor General's Office to ensure that victims are aware of their rights and that every necessary caution is taken to ensure that are victims' safe and that their privacy is maintained post-disposition.

7. The Department of Family and Children Services in Baldwin and the SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office will continue to work to promote a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing advocacy and improving the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking crimes. They agree to work with the SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office to formalize protocols to develop cross agency coordination and communication. They will work collaboratively throughout the community to ensure that victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are treated with dignity and respect.
8. The SAFE Program of the Baldwin County Solicitor General's Office will continue work with The Bright House to provide a collaborative, coordinated community response in an effort to reduce the incidence of child maltreatment and domestic violence through prevention, intervention, and education.

I) TIMELINE

Responsibilities under this Memorandum of Understanding would coincide with the grant period, anticipated to be 1/1/2020 through 12/31/2022.

VI) COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP

- 1) The collaboration service area is for Baldwin County.
- 2) The partners agree to collaborate, make referrals, assist one another, and generally provide services, education and advocacy for the victims of crime pursuant to the Georgia Crime Victims Bill of Rights.
- 3) We, the undersigned have read and agree with this MOU.