



BILL GRAVELL JR.
County Judge
WILLIAMSON COUNTY TEXAS

August 24, 2023

Mr. Donald Stout
Program Administrator Victims Services
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

RE: VOCA Grant Application #2884906 – Hope Alliance

Dear Mr. Stout,

I am writing this letter in support of the Williamson County Crisis Center's (DBA Hope Alliance) grant application titled "Services for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence". As you are aware, Williamson County is one of the two fastest growing counties in Texas, with nearly 250,000 individuals added to our population since the 2020 Census. As our county nears 700,000, our need for emergency shelter for women in domestic and sexual violence situations has increased, causing a lengthy wait list of approximately 2,400 women in need of assistance from Hope Alliance, who is the county's only emergency crisis shelter.

Because of the wait list, the Williamson County Commissioners Court took action to support Hope Alliance, with both the use of a County-owned building and with funding to support six months of personnel and operational costs for a new shelter in the county until September 30, 2023. With the County building and financial support, Hope Alliance opened the new 12-bed auxiliary shelter (known as "The Ranch") on April 1, 2023. In just four months, The Ranch has provided 673 sheltered nights of safety for 28 women fleeing dangerous living situations. I have personally visited the shelter and the wrap-around resources provided at this serene location truly provides hope and healing to women that have survived traumatic situations.

Unfortunately, I have been informed that there might not be grant funding available to continue this life-saving and transformational shelter in the upcoming fiscal year. Lack of funding could result in closing of the shelter effective October 1, 2023. I humbly request that the Office of the Governor consider additional funding for this important public safety project, as was unanimously recommended by the Capital Area Council of Governments' Executive Committee.

Sincerely,

Bill Gravell, Jr.
Williamson County Judge

Auxiliary Shelter Report

After a Lease Agreement and separate Funding Agreement were signed and approved in February 2023, by both the County Commissioners' Court and Hope Alliance, and in the interests of Public Safety, a County-owned property in Hutto, TX was turned into an Auxiliary Shelter and made operational by the Williamson County Crisis Center d/b/a Hope Alliance on April 1, 2023. The Auxiliary Shelter has a 12-bed capacity. Hope Alliance has operated another emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault in Round Rock, TX since 1990. The Round Rock Shelter has a 30-bed capacity.

Staffing a new shelter with a qualified Shelter Director, Case Manager, and qualified Victim Advocates in one month's time proved to be difficult, but Hope Alliance was able to recruit, hire and train a "skeleton crew," and opened the Hutto Shelter on April 1, 2023, with a few staff and 3 clients. Four more clients entered the Hutto facility during the month of April. Clients for Sheltered Nights of Safety at the Hutto facility are pre-selected from a Master Shelter Waitlist. Hutto Shelter clients are chosen based on the following criteria:

1. The client has completed a formal "Intake" process,
2. The client is an individual with no children needing shelter, and
3. The client has their own transportation.

The following Chart indicates the month of operation, the number of client intakes, exits, the total sheltered nights of safety provided, and updates for both the Master Waitlist and the Waitlist for the Hutto facility.

MONTH	# OF INTAKES	# OF EXITS	# OF SHELTERED NIGHTS	# ON HUTTO SHELTER WAITLIST
April	7	2	151	15
May	5	5	176	13
June	8	7	200	11
July	8	6	146	15
Total Year-To-Date	28	20	673	54

During a call to our 24/7/365 Hotline, or an inquiry via the web on our Crisis Chat, victims are asked questions from a Lethality Questionnaire to determine the danger level in which the victim is living. Those scoring "high danger" are moved to the head of the line for access to the Shelter. Those who score "medium or low danger" are asked if they'd be willing to be placed on our Waitlist. Those unwilling to go on a Waitlist are referred to other agencies with shelters outside of Williamson County.

Our Waitlists are updated daily and fluctuate based on the number of Hotline and Crisis Chats received. By the end of June 2023, the volume of Hotline Calls and Crisis Chats is 14% higher than the same time in 2022. The number of Sheltered Clients, Shelter Stays, and Sheltered Nights of Safety have all increased in comparison to the same time in 2022. Hope Alliance would not be providing increased Shelter Services were it not for the unprecedented cooperation and Agreements with Williamson County.

