CITY OF BELLINGHAM

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: **Victim Witness Advocate/Case Coordinator** **E-PLAN SG:E2-5**

DEPARTMENT: **Legal** **CS:N FLSA:N EEO4CODE:PR**

JOB SUMMARY:

Coordinates and conducts initial assessment interviews with victims and witnesses of domestic violence and other cases referred by the Bellingham Police Department. Documents the reaction of the victim, safety concerns, risk factors, the wishes of the victim, as well as the trauma and impact associated with the crime; prepares recommendations to aid prosecutors in determining the viability of prosecution; and provides clear information on the legal process for victims and witnesses in an effort to clarify options and minimize anxiety. Provides victims with information about appropriate community resources for counseling, health and protective services, and Crime Victim's Compensation. Responsible for follow-up or continual contact with victims and witnesses as needed. Works closely with Bellingham Police Department, Prosecutor's Office, Municipal Court, and private or non-profit services related to domestic violence. Provides support for prosecutions in Municipal Court. Screens and trains volunteer advocates to accompany victims to court.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP:

Reports to the City Attorney. Receives direction from Lead Prosecutor regarding daily activities and operational aspects of the prosecutor’s office. Work is performed under general supervision and the guidance of state law and City and department policies, procedures, rules and regulations.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB:

1. Provides assistance to victims of domestic violence with priority given to the safety of victims and, if applicable, other family or household members.

2. Makes or arranges direct contact with victims and witnesses of domestic violence and other crimes to provide support, referral, and comprehensive information regarding victim's rights, available options, community resources and the legal system. Maintains ongoing contact with victims and witnesses in order to provide information and to keep them engaged in the legal process. Assists in making arrangements for attendance at court hearings and in preparation as witnesses. Explains process of criminal prosecution to victims. Attends court as necessary.

3. Conducts victim assessment interviews to collect and analyze the information involving the immediate crime and any prior history of domestic violence, including safety concerns and risk factors. Effectively documents observations and recommendations for further reference, preparing and maintaining intake forms and activity logs. Makes recommendations that are reviewed and utilized by prosecutors when assessing the ability and willingness of victims and witnesses to assist in the prosecution.

4. Prepares correspondence and/or reports, tracks cases and uses a computer database to obtain, collect and evaluate information.

5. Engages in ongoing education and professional networking to maintain a high level of knowledge and competency in legal developments; trauma informed practices; developments in strategies to address domestic violence; and pertinent community resources. Implements these competencies in the daily performance of the job.

6. Notifies witnesses of change or cancellation of court date and keeps victims and witnesses informed of case status, pursuant to RCW 7.69.030

7. Coordinates activities related to STOP grant or other grants related to program area. Ensures grant requirements are met, tracks hours, and submits required reports.

8. Screens and trains volunteer advocates to accompany victims to court.

ADDITIONAL WORK PERFORMED:

1. As assigned, serves as liaison with community organizations and other governmental agencies regarding domestic violence issues. Coordinates activities of the City Attorney's Office related to domestic violence identification and prevention and serves on committees to address domestic violence within the community.

2. Facilitates the process for the court's consideration of no contact orders (including entry, modification, or rescission) by filing the appropriate paperwork with the clerk and assists the victim during the hearing.

3. Utilizes computer software, including word processing, spreadsheets, and databases to prepare letters, documents and graphics to revise drafts and charts into business quality formats; and to compose letters.

4. Performs filing and copying.

5. File maintenance, including archiving old files and maintaining a log of archived files.

6. Provides back up to the Legal Assistant – Criminal as needed.

7. Documents and updates procedure manual as needed.

8. Performs other related work of a similar nature and level.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities):

Knowledge of:
- Investigatory and trial processes related to domestic violence and other criminal cases including interviewing and assessment, court rules and procedures.
- Dynamics of domestic violence and community protocols developed for domestic violence cases.
- Safety, risk, and sensitivity concerns, precautions, practices and procedures applicable to assigned area.
- Courtroom protocol and decorum.

– Office procedures and practices.

Skill in:
– Use of computers and software appropriate to this position.

Ability to:
– Organize, prioritize and coordinate work in a multi-task environment to meet goals and objectives under varying deadlines.
– Listen well, be attentive to detail, ask pertinent questions and think logically to obtain and provide necessary information and assist in the solution of problems.
– Demonstrate appropriate initiative and use sound judgment in referring matters beyond the scope of knowledge and authority.
– Communicate sensitive and graphically explicit information on abuse effectively, both orally and in writing, in clear, concise language appropriate for the purpose and parties addressed, including correspondence, reports, and verbal testimony.
– Understand and respond competently and appropriately to cultural differences.
– Read, understand, learn, interpret and appropriately apply the laws, rules, regulations, policies, procedures and protocols pertinent to the field of assignment.
– Use tact, discretion and courtesy to gain the cooperation of others and establish and maintain effective working relationships with co-workers, members of the legal community, community resource providers and others.
– Respond effectively in crisis and emergency situations and exert a calming influence on, reassure and advise individuals in crisis.
– Apply independent judgment and carry work through to completion with minimal supervision and to work cooperatively as a member of a team.
– Ability and willingness to maintain confidentiality.
– Instruct and direct other employees and volunteers in methods or procedures needed to carry out their jobs.
– Maintain consistent and punctual attendance.
– Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.
– Physical ability to perform the essential functions of the job, including:
    – Frequently operate a computer and other office machinery such as a keyboard, mouse, phone, and fax machine;
    – Frequently communicate accurate information and ideas with others;
    – Occasionally move between work sites;
    – Occasionally transporting objects weighing up to twenty (20) pounds.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

Work is performed in office and courtroom settings in potentially volatile situations with clients who have undergone physical and emotional trauma. Potential exposure to verbal abuse and graphically explicit language about abuse. This is a sedentary position with minimal physical exertion requirements.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

– Requires a BA/BS in social services or closely related field, one (1) year of experience in Social Work or related field providing direct services to victims of domestic violence, and two (2) years experience with computers and legal office procedures, OR

– An equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to provide the applicant with the knowledge, skill and ability to successfully perform the essential functions of the job will be considered.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

– Employment contingent upon passing a criminal convictions check, local background check, and fingerprinting. Subject to re-check every five years.

PREPARED BY: Dawn Sturwold
1/98

REVIEWED BY: _____
Peter Ruffatto
City Attorney

REVISED BY: Holt Consulting
7/00
Lorna Klemanski
12/00
S. Cartwright
A. McEwen
11/19