



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: January 25, 2022

XX

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT OF SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) ADVOCACY SERVICES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego (County) provides Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Services to assist SSI eligible applicants and recipients in the County funded General Relief (GR) program and in the State funded Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI), as well as to children and adults with serious mental illness to obtain federally funded SSI benefits. This results in cost avoidance and cost recovery of County and State funds. Additionally, the SSI Advocacy Services program provides training and consultation to Behavioral Health Services Clubhouse advocates and the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) long term disability advocacy, thus extending SSI Advocacy Services to behavioral health consumers as well as disabled individuals who are experiencing homeless.

The County has been providing SSI Advocacy Services since 1989. Currently, services are provided through a contract that resulted from a competitive procurement process authorized by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) on December 15, 2015 (7). The current contract will expire on June 30, 2022.

Today's action requests approval from the Board to conduct a competitive procurement to continue SSI Advocacy Services. This item supports the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision by promoting the well-being of adults and seniors, who receive a higher level of benefits from SSI than from GR or CAPI. This action also supports the Framework for Ending Homelessness and aligns with its strategic domains by improving access to critical resources and supportive services that can help provide the stability individuals at-risk or experiencing homelessness need in order to overcome barriers and become self-sufficient.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue a competitive solicitation for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Services, and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award a contract

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for an initial term of one year, with four 1-year options and up to an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contracts as needed to reflect changes to services and funding subject to the approval of the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

These actions advance the San Diego County Board of Supervisors' commitment to supporting the most vulnerable residents in San Diego County. It is anticipated that today's action will have a positive impact on equity-seeking groups including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) women, people with disabilities, immigrants, youth, and the LGBTQ community by removing barriers to disability benefit eligibility and increasing access to economic resources. In order to support these underserved communities, an equity lens was used to implement Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and long-term disability benefit advocacy services. Individuals with disabilities often struggle disproportionately with social and economic impacts which can contribute to inequitable distribution of resources. SSI Advocacy Services provided by the County of San Diego (County) through this contracted program address these inequities and the cultural needs of a diverse population. To continue the County's commitment to helping our most vulnerable populations, today's action provides a mechanism to further support residents who are economically disadvantaged and experiencing homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2021-23 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in approximate costs and revenue of \$1,700,000 annually beginning in Fiscal Year 2022-23. The funding sources are Social Services Administrative Revenue, Realignment, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP), and existing General Purpose Revenue. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

This item will be reviewed by the Social Services Advisory Board at the regular scheduled meeting on January 12, 2022.

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego (County) has provided Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Services since February 1989. SSI Advocacy Services comprises navigating the complex federal SSI eligibility process, which includes an initial application and required forms, documentation of disability, linkage with the Social Security Administration and assistance with appeals. Other than program ineligibility, the primary reason for SSI denials are incomplete applications and inadequate medical documentation for disability claims.

SSI Advocacy Services are provided to General Relief (GR) recipients and disabled individuals who are experiencing homelessness who may be eligible for SSI. To be potentially eligible for SSI assistance due to disability, the disability must have lasted or be expected to last 12 months or longer. Elderly immigrants, who entered the United States prior to August 22, 1996, and who are

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disabled, may also be SSI eligible. Other immigrants, initially ineligible for SSI, but who are disabled, may qualify for the Cash Assistance Program for Indigents (CAPI) pending disability determination. CAPI is the primary assistance program for this group of immigrants. This action supports the Framework for Ending Homelessness and aligns with its strategic domains by improving access to critical resources and supportive services that can help provide the stability that individuals at-risk or experiencing homelessness need in order to overcome barriers and become self-sufficient.

In 2016, the County expanded SSI Advocacy Services to children under age 18 who may be eligible for SSI benefits. To be potentially eligible for SSI assistance due to disability, children must show that they have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments that causes marked and severe functional limitations and that can be expected to result in death or be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. Children receiving SSI must also meet financial eligibility requirements.

Many SSI Advocacy Services referrals result in successful SSI eligibility determination. The number of successful SSI Advocacy Services referrals during the current contract period (Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021) are broken down below by the referral program :

- GR: 514
- Behavioral Health Services B(HS)-Children, Youth and Families System of Care: 266
- BHS-Adult and Older Adult: 642
- Housing and Disability Advocacy Program: 95

The SSI program is key in assisting the most vulnerable elderly and disabled residents with obtaining self sufficiency and appropriate medical care. In addition to providing residents with monthly cash benefits, SSI can also help reduce homelessness and can help residents more readily access appropriate services and care. SSI Advocacy Services provided on behalf of the County have been provided through contracts executed under competitive procurement. The contract will expire on June 30, 2022. Today's action requests approval from the Board to conduct a competitive procurement to continue SSI Advocacy Services.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

This item supports the Building Better Health strategic initiative of the County of San Diego's 2022-27 Strategic Plan by improving access to a higher level of benefits that lead to improved physical and behavioral health. This item also supports the County of San Diego Strategic plan by focusing on a systematic approach that ensures equal opportunity for health and well-being through partnerships between the County and the contractor providing these services. Finally, this item also helps improve quality of life for San Diego residents by providing them with access to programs and services that enhance the community through increasing the well-being of residents.

Respectfully submitted,

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INCOME (SSI) ADVOCACY SERVICES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)
N/A

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