

# Support Services and Prevention Education for Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking Survivors

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## ***Our VOICE***

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# Application Form

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## *Question Group*

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Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding)i, as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

## **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds\***

Name of Project.

Support Services and Prevention Education for Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking Survivors

## **Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$601,910.87

## **Recovery Fund Eligible Category\***

Please select one:

Enhance behavioral and mental health services

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Our VOICE respectfully requests a partnership with Buncombe County to support survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking (SA/HT) through crisis response, case management, counseling, and prevention education.

This project will annually support 750 survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking through the work of a Volunteer Coordinator (who manages volunteers operating our 24/7 crisis line and hospital accompaniment), a Case Manager (who facilitates a continuum of care for survivors in partnership with dozens of partner social service agencies in Buncombe County), a Counselor (who provides evidence based therapeutic support to both individuals and groups), a Community Prevention Educator (who provides SA/HT prevention education in Buncombe County to adults), a Youth Prevention Educator (who provides SA/HT prevention education in schools), Administrative support (in the form of the Human Trafficking Director and Executive Director).

## Project Plan\*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

Our VOICE supports survivors of SA/HT through a trauma-informed approach of meeting people “where they are” and through evidence-based practices.

Our 24/7 crisis line and hospital accompaniment model engage staff during normal working hours and volunteers after hours and on weekends and holidays; this ensures all survivors seeking support are immediately served over the phone, via text, in person at the Family Justice Center, and at Mission Hospital. The Volunteer Coordinator manages this process.

Our Case Management system utilizes best practices of client support methodology with a continuum of care (MDT – multi disciplinary taskforce) to meet the myriad needs of each survivor. This may include, but is not limited to, finding emergency shelter and food resources, supporting re-entry and employment, providing transportation, and advocating for survivors in the law enforcement and court systems. The lead Case Manager manages this process with support from additional SA/HT Case Managers.

Our Counseling model consists of counselors, interns, and contractors – all providing up to sixteen sessions of intensive therapeutic support to survivors. This includes modalities such as EMDR, DBT, and CBT delivered individually and in groups such as those that are for male survivors, LGBTQ)+ survivors, survivors of incest, and other niche identifiers. The Counseling Director manages this process.

Our Prevention Education department is recognized across the state as the leader in innovative prevention models and has developed (and sold) several curricula modeling community-centered prevention methods. Our partnerships with the ABA (Asheville Brewers Alliance) has expanded over the last several years as we work with bars and breweries to keep patrons and staff safe from DFSA (Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault). Our partnerships with Buncombe County and Asheville City Schools allow us to go into the classroom and work with middle and high school students on how to develop their own boundaries and engage in bystander intervention to keep others safe.

Administrative support comes in the form of the Executive Director and Associate Director (who serves as the anti-Human Trafficking Director). This support is crucial to ensuring the operations of the agency are functioning as needed because stability in a crisis agency comes when the delivery of human resources, accounting, facilities, and development are sound.

The timeline for this project is Fall 2021 – December 2026.

## Statement of Need\*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

We at Our VOICE know all too well what the World Health Organization states about sexual violence; that it is a “pervasive, global public health problem of epidemic proportions.” Locally, we have seen significant growth in the numbers of survivors reaching out for our services; whether it be a homeless individual who is being trafficked in order to keep a roof over her head or an adult who was sexually abused as a child who has finally found the courage to speak his truth.

The silver lining of the “Me Too” movement has been survivors feeling more confident in sharing their stories. While it has been several years, we see its impact in earnest as taboos around sexual violence continue to be challenged. Additionally, with the national spotlight on human trafficking, Our VOICE has seen a rise in people recognizing their own trafficking as well as seeking education on how to support others.

Our VOICE is like many other social service agencies base in Buncombe County who have seen an increase in need, a growth in diverse demographics being served, and a call to action to deepen our commitment to serving our neighbors in need.

### **Link to COVID-19\***

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

Our VOICE has seen a 15% increase in the number of survivors calling the crisis line seeking counseling services; even with three full time counselors and two masters-level counseling interns, there is a one month waiting list. Survivors presenting are schizophrenic, bi-polar, need physician diagnosis, or require psychiatric medication; all services that legally, Our VOICE is unable to provide. Counselors work initially with clients to stabilize them during crisis and then coordinate with psychiatric care providers to ensure they receive the additional care required.

The number of homeless survivors who seek services through Our VOICE has risen over 200% in the last three years. Since the pandemic, Our VOICE has noticed a sharp increase in calls from homeless survivors to our crisis line who needed immediate assistance with shelter, food, and crisis counseling. Many of these survivors were also human trafficking victims who needed emergency clothing, transportation, and a coordinated care response with other service providers. Our VOICE recognizes this is a demographic of survivors that will continue to grow and as such our Community Engagement Coordinator has ramped up partnership efforts with homeless service providers to ensure wrap-around support.

Requests for community and school prevention programs also continue to grow. This year, we have had significantly more request for our “Teen Tech Safety” program; reports have shown an increase in online child sexual exploitation with so many children online unsupervised for long periods of time. One such report from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children shows calls to their tip line have doubled this year with stories of online child sexual exploitation.

Our VOICE is committed to meeting the needs of survivors in our community.

### **Population Served\***

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

Our VOICE serves all individuals over the age of 13 who have been impacted by sexual violence and human trafficking in Buncombe County.

Each year we serve approximately 350 callers to our crisis line, 150 individuals in case management, 350 clients through counseling, and over 1,500 individuals through prevention education. Demographically, in FY 2020, clients served by Our VOICE included -

Race/Ethnicity - 78% White, 11% Latinx, 6% African American, 2% Native American, 2% Multiple Races; 1% Other Race

Gender – 79% Female, 13% Male, 8% Transgender

Age – 6% 13-17, 22% 18-24, 64% 25-59, 8% 60+

## Results\*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

The objectives for this project are as follows (with numbers aggregated across five years):

1. Provide survivor-centered trauma informed crisis support and case management services to 1,500 individuals in Buncombe County.
2. Provide evidence-based therapeutic counseling to 1,500 individuals in Buncombe County.
3. Provide prevention education programming to 2,500 adults and 2,500 youth in Buncombe County.

## Evaluation\*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Our VOICE collects and analyzes data through a proprietary software system for Rape Crisis Centers called iCarol. Our lead Case Manager serves as the database monitor and evaluates client data on a monthly basis to ensure quality control and consistency. This software provides data on the number of clients served as well as their demographic data, what services have been provided, what personal goals have been set and achieved, and additional qualitative data specific to each survivor. This system also allows us to quantify outreach and prevention programming data for both community groups and schools.

## Equity Impact\*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Our VOICE believes that gender-based violence is rooted in systems of oppression and that the power dynamics of this exist all around us. As such, we see our work as part of the liberation of all people, both survivors of violence and those who perpetrate as a result of their own harm.

Our VOICE strives to provide services that are culturally competent, trauma informed, and include survivors at the center of their own healing. As such, we have a DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Committee made of staff and board members who meet monthly to determine organizational policy and guide our work within an equity framework. Our VOICE has received funding from the Dogwood Health Trust and Tzedek Foundation to further develop our equity work and each staff member has personal requirements as it pertains to their individual growth around equity.

We know this work is challenging and we are committed to ensuring that those individuals most impacted by violence, specifically those from traditionally marginalized communities, remain at the center of our mission.

## Project Partners\*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Our VOICE collaborates with myriad organizations to meet the needs of individuals who seek our services. Our collaborations involve referrals, coordinated responses and advocacy on behalf of individual clients, joint advocacy among law enforcement and justice system professionals, and task force alliances. We routinely collaborate with a variety of crisis services agencies, including homelessness services agencies, and with mental health professionals in our community. Our services are greatly enhanced by partnerships with agencies at our co-located Family Justice Center (FJC) of Buncombe County; the partners under the FJC umbrella include Mountain Child Advocacy Center, Pisgah Legal Services, Helpmate domestic violence agency, DHHS/CPS, Mission Hospitals FNE unit, the DA's office, the Asheville Police Department, and the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department.

Our VOICE leads a local SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) team to enhance interagency collaboration as well as an ERT (Emergency Response Team) for a four six-county region serving human trafficking survivors.

Our VOICE also contracts with mental health service providers in the community to support counseling clients when the waitlist for services exceeds our staff capacity.

## Capacity\*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

Our VOICE has been serving Buncombe County for nearly fifty years and has grown exponentially, both in budget and in clients served, in the last decade. Our services are supported through a combination of federal and corporate grants, foundation partnerships, special events, individual donations, and fee-for-service programs and products.

Our VOICE is one of several partner agencies to receive federal funds as part of the Family Justice Center as well as through independent awards from VOCA (Victim of Crime Act) and VAWA (Violence Against Women Act). Our VOICE manages the SAKI (Sexual Assault Kit Investigation) initiative for the state of North Carolina through the Department of Justice and employs a RPE (Rape Prevention Education) Coordinator through a grant from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control).

## Budget\*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be

funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Our VOICE Recovery Funds Budget.xlsx

### Special Considerations\*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

Our VOICE recently learned that one of our largest funding partners, VOCA, would be decreasing funding by sixty percent in the upcoming fiscal year. This, in combination with individual donations being targeted towards homelessness and hunger during the pandemic, has put Our VOICE in a position to see funding from more outside sources.

We believe a continued partnership with Buncombe County in support of survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking will benefit thousands of our neighbors over the course of the next five years and bring hope and healing when it is needed most.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Our VOICE Recovery Funds Budget.xlsx



