

**Proposal to the City of Austin by The SAFE Alliance (SAFE | stop abuse for everyone)  
for support for Crime Prevention and Victim Safety services  
July 20, 2018**

**Overview:**

For 44 years, The SAFE Alliance (SAFE | stop abuse for everyone) in Austin has provided high-quality services to respond to and decrease the human-caused crimes of child, sexual and domestic violence, and to stop violence and abuse through prevention and intervention. SAFE is requesting funding to provide two alternatives to Austin's public safety challenges.

- 1) Prevention: To prevent the emotional, financial and physical victimization of Austin residents before the crimes are committed, SAFE has two evidence-based violence prevention programs: *Expect Respect*, and *Strong Start*.
- 2) Safety: To improve outcomes for victims by quickly addressing immediate safety considerations through the creation of the *SAFE Mobile Advocacy Program*, an early-intervention safety and housing program.

Both options require a long view to be taken, and use strategies that are proven to be effective in preventing these crimes or intervening early to reduce future incidences of victimization.

SAFE is a longstanding, high-performing City of Austin grantee, and most of its clients are low-income, persons of color, and/or identify as members of other vulnerable communities.

**Facts:**

Too many youth and families are hurt by abuse and violence in Austin/Travis County. Local law enforcement reported 8,721 family violence cases and 988 sexual violence cases in 2017. 2,172 child abuse and neglect victims were reported in Travis County in 2016-17. If these violent crimes are not prevented and addressed, their long-term impacts include severe health and academic problems, homelessness, almost double the risk for early death, and other terrible consequences. Higher rates of child abuse and family violence, along with poverty, racial segregation, substance abuse and other devastating problems, occur in the "East Austin crescent" area where SAFE facilities are located. (SAFE can provide data references upon request).

By providing services to reduce violence, build safe individuals and families, and address barriers to safety and self-sufficiency faced by abuse survivors (especially low-income survivors), SAFE proposes these two crime reduction strategies that address the 2023 City of Austin Strategic Direction to reduce crime, under the strategic outcome that residents are safe in our home, at work, and in our community. Specific metrics are addressed in the following sections.

**The grand total for both the prevention & safety proposals is \$706,000/year**

*Note: Both proposals are scalable, either larger or smaller.*

Thank you for your consideration of SAFE's proposal. If you have any questions, please contact: Julia Spann, Co-CEO, The SAFE Alliance, [jspann@safeaustin.org](mailto:jspann@safeaustin.org), or 512-927-4741.

## **Proposal One: Crime Prevention**

SAFE's *Expect Respect* program is a comprehensive, **evidence-based** program that aims to prevent dating and sexual violence, and promote safe, healthy relationships. The program has multiple components that reduce Austin children's risk of victimization and perpetration, and gives them opportunities to make positive changes in their schools and community. A recent evaluation by the CDC showed reductions in aggression for boys and girls participating in Expect Respect's school-based support groups, and reductions in dating and sexual violence perpetration and victimization for boys, with the highest-risk boys showing the greatest improvement (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743517301664>). Expect Respect was recognized as a **model program** by the CDC, U.S. Department of Justice, National Center for Victims of Crime, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

3 full-time counselors are requested to serve 18 Austin Independent School District schools. (With this additional staffing, the program can fully serve 40 schools total.) **These positions will provide and serve:**

- 225 high-risk students (previous involvement or exposure to violence) will participate in weekly, curriculum-based groups and counseling to increase skills for safe, consensual relationships.
- School faculty will receive professional development on recognizing and responding effectively to incidents and disclosures of sexual harassment/assault, child abuse and domestic violence.
- Parents will attend workshops to support children in developing healthy dating relationships.
- 15 students will be employed by SAFE to educate their peers as Prevention Advocates.

The *Strong Start* program of SAFE serves Austin-area families with children ages 0-5 who are at-risk of child abuse/neglect. These crimes prevent children from growing up free from trauma and experiencing typical physical, social and emotional development. When children grow up experiencing child abuse/neglect, they are far more likely to engage in criminal behavior as a teen and/or adult. Via the parent education provided by Strong Start, parents become more confident in their parenting skills and develop stronger attachments to their children. This **reduces the risks** of parents engaging in child abuse/neglect and children growing up with a greater future likelihood of committing crime. It also works to **ensure** a community free of children being removed from their families, which costs exorbitant amounts of money within the law enforcement, legal and justice systems. In Strong Start, parents and children are able to access more stabilizing family supports (e.g., regular school attendance, housing support services, college, etc.), which leads to a decrease in the potential for the parent to engage in criminal activity related to family instability. Strong Start uses **evidence-based** curricula and tools, such as the Nurturing Parenting curricula, which is shown to be **effective** in reducing child abuse and increasing healthy parenting skills and knowledge of child development. (Combs, W., Reeth, J., VanDyke, P., Herrera, O., & Hasinger, R. (1996). *An evaluation of the nurturing program: SAFEchild*. Raleigh, NC: SAFEchild.)

2 full-time Parent Educators are requested **to provide** in-home parent education services, **to serve:**

- 120 parents, who will receive healthy parenting education,
- 180 children, who will benefit from the parenting education and other program services.
- Case management, and crisis assistance funds for housing and other basic needs.
- Families can also receive individual and family therapy and substance abuse recovery support, funded by other sources.

*Proposal One* addresses this strategic outcome and the following related metrics and strategies from the *2023 City of Austin Strategic Direction* document (p. 9-12):

- Strategic Outcome: Being safe in our home, at work, and in our community.
  - Metric: 90% of the 525 youth and families served will report feeling safe at home.
    - Strategy: Pursue evidence-based strategies to address root causes of harm, crime, and lack of public safety.

**Cost: \$194,000/year for Expect Respect + \$159,000/year for Strong Start = \$353,000.**

## **Proposal Two: Ensuring Safety**

Adults and youth in abusive relationships are isolated, and kept from working, having access to money or even a cellphone. The largest barrier for victims of domestic or dating violence to escape violence in Austin is housing and poverty. If a victims is without safe housing, many stay in the violent relationship only to have another crime committed against them.

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), reports 3,016 Austin households received rapid rehousing services the past year. Of those, 1,000 (33%), experienced domestic violence, and 368 (12%) were actively or trying to flee domestic violence. Rapid rehousing is a researched model that keeps victims and their children safe and housed, thereby reducing future domestic violence crimes.

SAFE proposes to implement a ***Mobile SAFE Advocacy program***. Using a housing-first model (an evidence-based practice) to keep survivors in their homes safely, or move them quickly into safe housing (and thereby avoid shelter, also known as rapid rehousing), SAFE proposes to hire 2 advocates (i.e. case managers) to assess safety, and provide short-term financial assistance to meet vital housing and safety needs of abuse survivors.

Safety, and the reduction of future crime, will be achieved by either:

- a) Making the survivor's home safe and helping them stay in that home (getting an emergency protective order, changing locks and an emergency phone along with safety planning, along with sort term financial assistance to get stabilized) which helps the victim get safe and prevent future violence and homelessness, or;
- b) If staying in their home is not a safe option, or if the survivor is already homeless, pay housing costs (deposits, rent and utility bills) and rapidly move the victim and her children into safe housing, thereby avoiding violence.

Two Mobile Advocates will be hired from among SAFE's skilled, diverse staff, to connect with survivors when they first reach out for help.

- 80 households /year will receive rapid rehousing, case management, and related services.
- 200 households/year will receive brief intervention services (i.e., keeping people safe in their homes, or providing short-term financial assistance to relocate them).
- All program participants will be offered help navigating jobs, educational, tax assistance, public benefits and other resources. They will also learn about budgeting.
- All program participants will work with their Advocate to create safety plans and strategies to protect them from future harm.
- Other existing SAFE services will be offered to program participants, among which are legal services, forensic exams and other health services, crisis counseling via phone, etc.

Proposal Two addresses these strategic outcomes and the following related metrics and strategies from the ***2023 City of Austin Strategic Direction document*** (p. 2-7):

- Strategic Outcome: Being safe in our home, at work, and in our community.
  - Metric: 85% of 280 households (or approximately 600 people, depending on number of children per household) will have a safe home.
    - Strategy: Pursue evidence-based strategies to address root causes of harm, crime, and lack of public safety.

**Cost: \$353,000/year.**

## **Addendum**

Below are stories about how these requested SAFE programs have benefited the safety and well-being of individuals and families. (Identifying information has been changed, to protect client confidentiality):

### **Joe: Expect Respect program**

An Expect Respect counselor who identifies as a Black Muslim male received a referral (from an AISD school) for a student who had posed for a photo with a Nazi flag at school. This student also threatened to shoot LGBTQ people. "Joe", who identifies as Caucasian, agreed to meet with the Counselor and join the Expect Respect support group for boys at his school. During the school year, Joe attended almost all of the weekly groups, actively participated in its activities and discussions, and was very insightful. He did not share why he was referred to the group. Many of the other group members were youth of color, and shared experiences of discrimination, plus the common thread of family violence. At the end of the school year, Joe said he learned a lot from the other students in the group. He said if he hadn't come into the group, he wouldn't have changed his behavior. What he enjoyed the most was not being judged, and having a safe space to express his feelings. He shared that he has more empathy for people now who, like him, may be hurting.

### **The Campos Family: Strong Start program**

The Campos family was referred to Strong Start, and at the first session, Ms. Campos said she feared she was passing her anger issues and past trauma down to her children. They were acting aggressively, and not doing well in school. Ms. Campos never had chances to learn healthy parenting, coping and other skills. This hurt her personally, professionally and economically, and hurt her children. In Strong Start, Ms. Campos and the Parent Educator worked on building healthy parenting skills and relationships, and she also received case management and counseling to address her own abuse history. At the time that they completed the program, she and her family had made great progress. Her children's school performance improved, and they now address challenges in healthy, non-hostile ways. Ms. Campos gained skills she had lacked, and is doing much better in her job and in her relationships with her children and others. Thanks to the great work they did in Strong Start program, they are no longer an at-risk family, but one with healthy skills, and full of love.

### **Kimberly: Community Resource Advocacy program**

"Kimberly" was referred to the Community Resource Advocacy program while living in SAFE's Family Shelter. She contacted and came to the shelter due to her husband's violence, including attacking her while pregnant. While in shelter, Kimberly received medical care, and, working with her Community Resource Advocate, received Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) and obtained housing. Kimberly continued to receive program services, completed her one-year TBRA lease, and paid her bills on time. She started a hair business from her home, and after her child entered childcare, she transferred her business to a salon to increase her clientele and income. Kimberly received legal services (and was awarded child custody and child support), attended counseling at SAFE, and received her GED. After her TBRA lease was up, Kimberly found safe, permanent housing in the community. She used her savings and income from her business to pay the application fee, security deposit, rent, childcare, and other expenses. Kimberly stopped incidences of future domestic violence by leaving her abusive partner, and putting legal conditions into place. She exited the Community Resource Advocacy program stably housed, self-sufficient, and a happy and safe parent.

(Note: SAFE does not yet have mobile Advocacy services as proposed to the City. If they had been available, Kimberly would have been connected with a Mobile advocate at the time of her first call to the SAFELINE (SAFE's 24-hour hotline, chat and text service); and by using the "housing-first" model, SAFE would have helped Kimberly stay in her home, or quickly relocate. She would have been able to achieve the amazing outcomes above, without having to go into shelter (which is more costly than keeping people safe and housed in the community).