

VOCA '19 - PROJECT ABSTRACT

PROBLEM STATEMENT and NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office provides public safety services to the citizens of Sedgwick County. The Sheriff's Office provides these services to citizens living in both urban and rural areas of Sedgwick County. The Sheriff's Office works closely with its community partners and is a member of the Wichita/Sedgwick County Coordinated Community Response Team (CCR). Through this close working relationship with other community advocacy organizations and through internal assessment, the Sheriff's Office has identified a gap in immediate advocacy services for victims of crime in Sedgwick County, specifically for those victims and survivors who live in the more rural areas of Sedgwick County. The Sheriff's Office identified this gap in services and acknowledged the need for a Victim Advocate position in the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, which seeks to identify funding for the implementation of a Victim Advocate position in the agency.

Currently the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office works with other advocacy services to provide after-crisis services but lacks advocacy at the most critical time during crisis. Deputies and detectives, often with very limited trauma-informed training or experience advocating for victims, try to refer services and meet the needs of victims, but often fail to fully understand, identify or fulfill the victims' needs. Introducing victim-oriented assistance at the time of crisis will increase the likelihood that victims will be connected to other community resources and will prevent victims from having to seek assistance during a traumatic time.

The Victim Advocate, working as a "first responder" for victims, will assist the Sheriff's Office in better responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims and will provide early crisis intervention. The Victim Advocate will: assist primary and secondary victims with stabilization of their lives following victimization, assist victims in understanding the criminal justice system, educate victims of their rights as a crime victim, strive to provide a measure of safety to the victims. VOCA funding will allow for a new Victim Advocate position to be added to the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office, which will greatly improve the ability to serve and assist hundreds of victims of crime each year.

JUSTIFICATION OF NEED FOR GRANT FUNDS/INCREASE

The Sheriff's Office is requesting VOCA funding to create a new Victim's Advocate position, which will vastly improve our agency's ability to assist victims of crime in our community. The Victim Advocate will bridge a gap in services and provide assistance, education and advocate for victims of crime at the time of crisis, a need which currently is largely unmet. A Victim Advocate, with specialized victim-oriented training and a thorough understanding of available victim resources, will greatly enhance our ability to provide and/or refer services to victims of crime. Crisis response,

outreach and collaboration with other service providers will be the primary focus of the Victim Advocate.