



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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CM/ACM	<b>KT</b>
Finance	<b>CH/LC</b>
DA	<b>KM</b>
Risk Mgt	<b>DE</b>
HR	<b>N/A</b>
Other	<b>GE</b>

## STAFF REPORT

**BOARD MEETING DATE: January 23, 2018**

**DATE:** Wednesday, December 13, 2017

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Mary Herzik, Family Services Manager, Second Judicial District Court (775) 328-3299, [mary.herzik@washoecourts.us](mailto:mary.herzik@washoecourts.us)

**THROUGH:** Jackie Bryant, District Court Administrator and Clerk of Court

**SUBJECT:** Acknowledge a grant award of [\$10,000, no County match required], awarded to the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation, retroactive December 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 for the Family Peace Center, and direct the Comptroller's Office to make the necessary budget adjustments. (All Commission Districts.)

### SUMMARY

The Second Judicial District Court has been awarded \$10,000 from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation to continue opportunities for children and parents to visit at the Family Peace Center. Grant funds will be used to serve children's best interests by maintaining relationships or re-establishing contact between children and parents when visitation rights have been interrupted or when visitation is unsafe after separation or divorce. As courts struggle with just remedies to visitation disputes, supporting the integrity of the child's time with each parent and fostering a child's relationship with siblings and extended family are key reasons supervised visitation programs have emerged as a needed service. As noted visitation expert Nancy Fallows observes, "The need for supervised visitation services is growing around the country. The courts have more of an awareness now that it might not be appropriate to leave a child alone with a parent with a history of certain behavior. Yet, protecting and nurturing that relationship is very valuable to the child." (New York Times, April 2007).

This grant contributes to funding for two Washoe County Sheriff's Office ("WCSO") Deputies to be on site at the Family Peace Center during all non-Court hours when visitation services are being provided. By enhancing safety during supervised visitation and exchange, ongoing contact is possible between a child and non-custodial parent when there are concerns about domestic violence, substance abuse or a parent's mental health. Indeed, by making safe contact possible between a child and non-custodial parent during the pendency of legal proceedings, important family relationships are preserved and maintained.

**AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_**

The reason for requesting acknowledgement of this grant award, retroactively, is due to the Court waiting to receive grant funds following notice of the award.

County Priority supported by this item: Safe, secure and healthy communities.

### **PREVIOUS ACTION**

The Board of County Commissioners has previously acknowledged such grants on behalf of the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation in the amount of \$9,000 on March 27, 2012, agenda item 8G(3).

The Board of County Commissioners has previously acknowledged such grants on behalf of the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation in the amount of \$15,000 on January 28, 2014, agenda item 7E(3).

The Board of County Commissioners has previously acknowledged such grants on behalf of the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation in the amount of \$15,000 on July 22, 2014, agenda item 8E.

The Board of County Commissioners has previously acknowledged such grants on behalf of the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation in the amount of \$25,000 on March 22, 2016, agenda item 6C.

The Board of County Commissioners has previously acknowledged such grants on behalf of the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation in the amount of \$30,000 on August 8, 2017, agenda item 6G(2).

### **BACKGROUND**

The Second Judicial District Court has provided supervised visitation and exchange services for court-referred families since 1996. In 2003, Washoe County received funding through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, Safe Havens to provide visitation services for adult and child victims of domestic violence. The grant supported a stand-alone visitation center known as the Family Peace Center. In June 2006 the Safe Havens grant ended. Visitation and exchange services continued at the Family Peace Center with funding from the Second Judicial District Court, supplemented with grants and donations. In July 2010, the Family Peace Center relocated to the courthouse, saving costs for the building lease and operational expenses. The Family Peace Center now operates in a small space on the second floor of the District Court where services are provided five days a week. Although the space is cramped, inadequate, and does not meet best practices, it is imperative the District Court continue to provide these needed services to the community.

The Family Peace Center operates 5 days per week:

- Monday 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Tuesday 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Thursday 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Friday 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The WCSO Deputies are not present after 5:00 p.m. or on Saturdays for Court operations. This grant contributes to funding for two WCSO Deputies to be on site at the Family Peace Center during all non-Court hours when visitation services are being provided. The presence of WCSO Deputies is critical to ensuring visiting children and families are safe. Since 2016, the following incidents have occurred:

On June 12, 2016, a visiting parent arrived at the Family Peace Center with gifts. The Parties were referred under an Extended Protection Order which does not allow the exchange of gifts. The visiting parent's behavior escalated with Family Peace Center staff. Staff became concerned for the safety of those present and sought assistance from WCSO Deputies. When WCSO Deputies requested the visiting parent exit the Peace Center with them, he brandished a large metal, safety-pin type weapon at the Deputies. The visiting parent was combative and belligerent with the Deputies, refusing to obey their commands and, ultimately, was arrested and criminally charged.

On March 27, 2017, a custodial parent arrived at the Court with her child for visitation. At security, the custodial parent placed her purse on the conveyer to be screened. Security observed a handgun in her purse. Security contacted the WCSO Deputies who detained the custodial parent. The Deputies located a loaded handgun in her purse. The custodial parent was arrested and criminally charged.

On April 12, 2017, a parent slapped his child during visitation. Physical discipline of any kind is prohibited at the Family Peace Center. Staff sought the assistance of the WCSO Deputies to escort the visiting parent out.

On November 22, 2017, during visitation a parent was instructed to put her cellular telephone away. Family Peace Center rules require all phones be turned off and put away so attention is focused exclusively on the child during visitation. The visiting parent argued with staff, became disruptive to other visiting families and kicked Center toys. Staff terminated the visit and sought the assistance of the WCSO Deputies to escort the visiting parent out.

But for the presence of two WCSO Deputies, the outcome of each incident could have resulted in injury to children and families. Further, the National Sheriff's Association recently performed a security assessment of the Court. The report specifically identified the Family Peace Center as a potential hostage situation. Continued presence of the WCSO Deputies will mitigate this risk.

Safety is a primary consideration in visitation programming. Ensuring Family Peace Center participants feel physically and emotionally safe is necessary when abusive behavior has been part of the family fabric. Moreover, ensuring safe visitation is an

important component in reducing further incidences of domestic violence. Additionally, providing a safe environment for visitation and exchanges protects the public, as these visits and exchanges would otherwise occur in an unsupervised public setting where the potential for violence exists. This grant ensures safeguards are in place to assure a child's contact with a non-custodial parent is safe and appropriate.

The reason for requesting acknowledgement of this grant award, retroactively, is due to the Court waiting to receive grant funds following notice of the award.

### **GRANT AWARD SUMMARY**

**Project/Program Name:** Family Peace Center.

**Scope of the Project:** The Second Judicial District Court will continue to provide access to safe supervised visitation and exchange services at the Family Peace Center. Enhancing security is consistent with best practices for visitation centers serving children and adult victims of domestic violence and complies with Sec.406 of the Model Code on Domestic and Family Violence.

**Benefit to Washoe County Residents:** Supervised visitation centers are an essential component of an integrated community intervention system to eliminate abuse and protect its victims. Providing a safer and more secure environment for children to visit with a non-custodial parent enhances community safety.

**On-Going Program Support:** N/A

**Award Amount:** \$10,000

**Grant Period:** December 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

**Funding Source:** Lee F. Del Grande Foundation

**Pass Through Entity:** N/A

**CFDA Number:** N/A

**Grant ID Number:** N/A

**Match Amount and Type:** No Match

**Sub-Awards and Contracts:** N/A

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Should the board acknowledge this grant award, the adopted budget will be amended in the following accounts:

Internal Order	G/L Account	Amount
20363	484195	\$10,000
20363	701130	\$10,000

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners acknowledge a grant award of [\$10,000, no County match required], awarded to the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation, retroactive December 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 for the Family Peace Center, and direct the Comptroller's Department to make the necessary budget adjustments.

**POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with the Second Judicial District Court's recommendation, a possible motion would be: Move to acknowledge a grant award of [\$10,000, no County match required], awarded to the Second Judicial District Court from the Lee F. Del Grande Foundation, retroactive December 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 for the Family Peace Center, and direct the Comptroller's Department to make the necessary budget adjustments.