



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Warren

Program Title: Warren County Community Liaison

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Douglas P. Stanley

Title: County Administrator

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Douglas P. Stanley

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Liaison position through the Warren County Department of Social Services was conceived following a two-day strategic planning retreat of the Warren County Youth Advisory Board in 2013, where twenty-five community partners met to research and address unmet needs of youth in Warren County. The Community Liaison, as originally proposed, would be a centralized intake source to identify these unmet needs and connect the youth of Warren County with existing community resources. However, as the definition and scope of the position expanded with help and input from additional community partners, so did the associated duties. The Community Liaison now reaches every population and demographic, linking every client, each with a unique set of circumstances, to services and gathering specific data based on the client's needs, including financial information and previous assistance received. The Community Liaison partners with community-based organizations providing assistance and resources as well as participates in community events to help raise awareness of not only the position but pertinent issues in Warren County, including child/elder abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and mental health issues. The Community Liaison approaches every situation with compassion and empathy, striving to refer every client to the best possible community partners or individuals.

PROBLEM WHICH INSPIRED THE PROGRAM

The Community Liaison position was developed through the collaboration of numerous community partners to research and address unmet needs of youth and other underserved populations in Warren County. Oftentimes, the people who most need

particular services and resources fall through the cracks when there is no specialized or mandated funding available through the Department of Social Services or other entities. This position was created to provide client-specific assistance and refer clients to community partners or individuals able to provide the specific services needed. The Community Liaison began as a part-time position in 2016, but as the needs of the citizens of Warren County continued to grow, the position became full-time in 2017.

OVERVIEW/FULFILLMENT OF AWARDS CRITERIA

The groundwork for what would eventually become the Community Liaison position was laid in December 2013 following a two-day strategic planning retreat of the newly-founded Warren County Youth Advisory Board, where twenty-five community partners met to research and address unmet needs of youth in Warren County. The goals, focus and development of the position were the task of the Central Coordination and Access and Funding Committee of the Youth Advisory Board. As the idea of a Community Liaison was new at that time, the Committee needed to identify unmet needs within the community and compile existing community resources. The Committee then developed an in-depth job description listing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for this important new position. It also included additional preferences such as knowledge of the services, agencies, and programs available in Warren County and the surrounding localities.

However, as the position developed and matured with the help of additional input from community partners and Youth Advisory Board members, the role of the Community Liaison expanded to include referrals for services and resources to every population and

demographic in the Warren County community. As a result, the position became more extensive, with a cache of resources ranging from comprehensive to specialized. Community partners refer clients to the Community Liaison for additional assistance, and in turn, the Community Liaison provides a specific referral to an organization or person who may be able to assist the client. The Community Liaison completes the initial outreach and is available to meet with the client after hours and on weekends to provide information and, if necessary, forms and applications from community resources.

Part of the necessary training for this position included learning how other community partners arrange assistance for and interact with clients, including the Warren County Sheriff's Office, the Town of Front Royal Police Department, Northwestern Community Services Board, Warren County Public Schools, and the Warren County Department of Social Services. The Community Liaison participates in ride alongs with law enforcement personnel, numerous team meetings with various community partners, and training sessions both internal to the various community agencies and external trainings, which required countless hours of outreach, partnering, and marketing of the position.

To address the client's need at hand, the Community Liaison not only furnishes referrals to agencies or individuals delivering services but also researches and gathers specific demographic information regarding the client's needs as well as other pertinent data, including financial information and previous assistance received. In some instances, the clients served by the Community Liaison are individuals who have fallen through the cracks and have no recourse through mandated funding through the Department of Social

Services or other similar entities. For these clients, the Community Liaison has been able to secure funding to assist them, primarily from the outreach efforts of the Community Liaison and fundraising activities. The Community Liaison also participates in multiple community-based outreach events and is active in multiple groups providing resources within Warren County, including St. Luke's Free Clinic, the Concern Hotline, the House of Hope, Warren County Best Practices Court, the Warren Coalition, and various religious organizations.

The Community Liaison position has provided client-specific assistance for access to and delivery of food and emergency provisions as well as connecting clients to temporary shelters in the area and to individuals willing to provide temporary shelter to people in need. The Community Liaison partnered with community resources to develop a thermal shelter with local churches to shelter people during the winter; presently, four churches in Warren County are submitting the necessary documentation and applications to become thermal shelters. The Community Liaison is a trained Family Partnership Meeting Facilitator and has provided this service to community partners as well as participated in meetings at the request of community partners to provide assistance and referrals for families in need. This position also participates in community events to help raise awareness of not only the position but pertinent issues in the community including child and elder abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, mental health issues, and the opioid crisis. The Warren County Community Liaison has participated in community festivals, conferences, health and safety fairs, parades and other community events. The Community

Liaison delivers presentations to various civic organizations including Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce's monthly networking events.

The Community Liaison position is the culmination of a collaborative effort to address an identified need in the Front Royal-Warren County community for an ombudsman/advocate for residents of the community to assist clients with referrals to community resources such as housing, food, and medical services. The position provides information and referral services; educates clients on available community services and programs; refers clients to groups or agencies that provide assistance as appropriate. It also conducts one-on-one interviews with program participants either in person or over the phone; interviews clients to gain information to address their needs.

The adoption of this position has addressed a specific need in our community and meets the following award criteria:

- Offers a new service to county residents; fills in the gaps in the availability of social and human service agencies and improves the delivery of such services in the community.
- Through data collection by the position, additional information about human service needs in the community is available for the Social Services Advisory Board, Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT), the Warren County Board of Supervisors, and a multitude of other organizations providing services in the community, thereby facilitating effective public policy making.

Lastly, as a position servicing multiple agencies, the Community Liaison helps to coordinate services as well as deliver and promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination.

As new issues present themselves in Warren County, the Community Liaison continues to try and secure resources for the clients these issues affect. The Community Liaison approaches every situation with compassion and empathy and strives to refer every client, each with a unique set of circumstances, with the best possible community partners or individuals.

RESULTS/SUCSESSES OF THE PROGRAM

The following stories were provided by Michelle Smeltzer, Warren County Community Liaison:

“[A seventy-year-old woman and her dog were] referred to me by DSS - Adult Services. It was really cold, and she was sleeping in her car with her dog and all belongings. I have to mention that she was not chronically homeless; she made a couple of bad decisions that put her in a homeless situation. She is on Social Security but that only lasted a couple of weeks paying for a motel. Adult Services bought her some food but didn't have the funds to pay for two more weeks of motels until she received her next Social Security check. I spoke with her and discovered she didn't have SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] or Medicaid to pay for her Medicare Co-Pay. She filled out the applications and received SNAP and also Medicaid. Having the Medicare copay paid by Medicaid gave her an additional \$130 a month in her Social Security check.

I asked two churches to each pay a week for her, and at the end of those two weeks, I asked a woman who works with homeless in our community if she would house my client until I could find affordable housing for her. She accepted my client into her home, and they immediately became great friends. I didn't have to find housing for her because she is staying where she is. It has been a few months now, and they are happy roommates.”

“I had a call from an electric company asking for help for an elderly woman who had her electric shut off because the point of entry was a fire hazard. He wanted to know if there was any way someone could fix it because she didn't have the funds to pay an electrician. I called the Project Manager for our building and explained the situation and asked if he knew of an electrician who would be willing to look at it for free. He found one, and they ended up fixing it.”

Ms. Smeltzer is presently working with two elderly individuals who have no water because their well pump is not working and do not have the funds to fix the issue. She is also assisting a woman who resides in a tent in the woods in Town.

Since June 2017, Ms. Smeltzer has received calls for assistance from numerous citizens residing in both the Town (82 calls) and the County (11 calls). Thirty-seven (37) children under the age of 18 have called for assistance, and sixty (60) individuals who have called have had prior involvement with the Department of Social Services. Ms. Smeltzer has conducted eleven (11) citizen referrals over the phone and met with thirty-five (35) citizens out of the office.

Ms. Smeltzer has referred four (4) citizens for assistance with paying rent, thirteen (13) for assistance with paying their electric bill, twenty-five (25) for assistance with homelessness, and ten (10) citizens who simply needed assistance around the holiday season. She has connected three (3) citizens with services through Habitat for Humanity, five (5) citizens with services through St. Luke's Community Clinic, and three (3) citizens with Child Protective Services. She has helped twenty-five (25) individuals complete and submit applications for both Medicaid and SNAP through the Department of Social Services as well as provided many other miscellaneous referrals to various community programs.

FINANCING OF THE PROGRAM

Initially, the position was conceived to be separate and distinct from any existing organization and to have direct oversight from the Youth Advisory Board. The rationale was the position should remain autonomous to the various organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) it would serve. There was concern should the position be deemed a “Social Services” position, a large number of people would not want to interact with the position due to the potential stigma social services brings, particularly in dealing with youth issues. There was, however, considerable difficulty in obtaining necessary funding to hire the position and concerns with the quality of applicants if the position was not full-time.

The Community Liaison position was ultimately funded through a combination of state and local funding through the Department of Social Services as a Human Services Assistant III position. The annual salary for the position is \$31,727.83, with benefits bringing the total position cost to \$47,740.58. The position resides in the Department of Social Services, and there was no additional cost for the office space/furnishings. The overhead costs of the space have been provided at no additional cost to the Department. It is anticipated ancillary costs associated with the position (vehicle usage, office supplies, telephone, cell phone, etc.) total approximately \$10,000 per year for a total annual position cost of \$60,000.

While it was not an ideal situation to nest the position under one of the participating organizations associated with the Youth Advisory Board, the ability to fund a full-time

position far outweighed those initial concerns. The ultimate concerns about the connection to the Department of Social Services have proven unfounded and have been mitigated by taking several steps including 1) keeping Social Services off business cards, vehicles, and advertisements; 2) meeting clients and organizations off-site as needed to allow people to feel more comfortable; and 3) conducting a local marketing campaign to establish the position as an independent voice.