

**Webb County Sheriff's Office**  
**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between**  
**Webb County and Casa de Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter and**  
**the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court**  
**for a Grant Application to the**  
**Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) for a**  
**FY 2022 Justice for Families Grant Program (20 Points Total)**

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**WHEREAS**, Webb County—through the Webb County Sheriff's Office—which assumes the responsibility for the development and implementation of the proposed grant project, Casa de Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter, and the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court have come together to collaborate and to make an application for an Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Fiscal Year 2022 Justice for Families grant program; and

**WHEREAS**, the partners listed above have agreed to enter into a collaborative agreement in which the Webb County Sheriff's Office will be the lead agency and named applicant and both the Casa Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter and the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court will be partners in this application; and

**WHEREAS**, the partners herein desire to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding setting forth the services to be provided by the collaborative agreement; and

**WHEREAS**, the application prepared and approved by the collaborative through its partners is to be submitted to the Office on Violence Against Women on or before March 10, 2022;

***1) Description of Partner Agencies***

Webb County, a local unit of government, has existed in South Texas with its county seat as Laredo, Texas, since its establishment by the Texas legislature in 1848.

Since that time, the Webb County Sheriff's Office has continually sought to provide safety and protection of all its citizens, especially victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Established in 1998, Casa de Misericordia is a domestic violence shelter that assists victims of domestic violence with safety planning; information and referral; legal, medical and other forms of advocacy; shelter; crisis hotline; counseling and support groups; educational and life skills classes; and community presentations and education.

The 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court was created in 1999 by the Texas Legislature to serve the County of Webb and began operations in January of 2001. It was originally created as a special district court to give preference to cases involving domestic violence and cases under the Family Code and Health and Safety Code. In 2011, the courts in Webb County agreed to distribute all these types of cases equally. However, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court continues to preside over family law matters, including adoptions, divorces, parental terminations, protective orders, and general

civil cases filed in Webb County. In 2004, the Honorable Oscar J. Hale, Jr. was first elected by the citizens of Webb County to serve as judge to preside over the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, has been subsequently re-elected for four consecutive terms with no opposition, and is currently serving his fifth term.

## ***II) History of Relationship***

Whereas, Webb County, including the Sheriff's Office, has worked diligently to address the issues of domestic violence for over twenty (20) years; and

Whereas, the Webb County Sheriff's Office and Casa de Misericordia have worked in close collaboration since 2005;

Whereas, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court has worked on issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence since it began operations in January 2001 and was originally created by the Texas Legislature as a special district court dealing with domestic violence and cases under the Family Code and the Health and Safety Code.

Whereas, the Webb County Sheriff's Office and Casa de Misericordia have previously successfully applied for and managed grants together.

Whereas, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court under the direction of Judge Oscar J. Hale, Jr. has also successfully applied for and managed federal and state grants to provide specialized treatment court services to serve distinct and special needs populations, such as establishing a Drug Treatment Court, and, currently, a specialized court for military veterans with substance abuse problems, in Laredo/Webb County. The Webb County Sheriff's Office has provided continuing unwavering support of these grant-funded endeavors by 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court through in-kind and collaborative efforts.

Whereas, Judge Oscar J. Hale, Jr., presiding judge over the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, was awarded in 2008 the "Pioneer Award" by the Webb County Domestic Violence Coalition and in 2012 was recognized by the Texas Center for the Judiciary for having met the certification standards for family jurisprudence.

Whereas, the Webb County representatives, including the representative for the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, Sheriff's Office, its Safe Haven Program, and Casa de Misericordia meet on a monthly basis;

Whereas, a senior management member of the Webb County Sheriff's Office also serves on Casa de Misericordia's board of directors.

Whereas, the Webb County Sheriff's Office, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, and Casa de Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter agree to work together in collaborative and mutually cooperative manner in order to best serve the needs of the children, youth, and adult victims of domestic violence, dating violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and/or stalking in the Laredo/Webb County area.

### ***III) Development of Application***

Whereas, the Webb County Sheriff's Office developed the full grant application; and

Whereas, the Webb County Sheriff's Office approached Casa de Misericordia and the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court with the proposal to partner for the successful submission of a grant application to the Office on Violence Against Women; and

Whereas, Casa de Misericordia and the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court participated in the development of the application by procuring letters of support, providing its budgetary needs, submitting a budget narrative, enlisting support from other service providers, giving the necessary input and agreeing to deliver programmatic management and conducting grant activities, and agreeing to enter into a formal MOU.

### ***IV) Roles and Responsibilities***

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is hereby agreed by and between the partners as follows:

- 1) The Webb County Sheriff's Office will serve as the lead applicant with the Webb County Judge serving as the authorized official in all items pertaining to this grant and handling all grant paperwork and management functions through all proper and appropriate divisions, including but not limited to the Webb County Sheriff's, its Safe Haven Program, the Webb County Auditor's Office, the Webb County Budget Office, and the Webb County Purchasing Department. Casa de Misericordia and 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court will provide the appropriate and necessary paperwork for grant fiscal and programmatic compliance through their partnerships, including any applicable grant program activity reports, time sheets and other reimbursement paperwork.
- 2) Through grant funding, Webb County will provide supervised visitation and safe visitation exchange of children and youth by and between parents in situations involving domestic violence, dating violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and/or stalking.
- 3) Casa de Misericordia will provide case management and education to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking including: working with victims to establish goals, helping victims explore and access available resources, safety planning, information and referral, court accompaniment, immigration advocacy, and, when available, pro bono attorney referrals.
- 4) Furthermore, through the coordination with the office of Judge Oscar J. Hale, Jr., 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Judge and the Webb County Sheriff's Office, Casa de Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter will provide education and training to court-based and court-related personnel, including law enforcement officials, on the dynamics of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including information on perpetrator behavior, evidence-based risk factors for domestic and dating violence homicide, and on issues relating to the needs of victims, including safety, security, privacy, and confidentiality, including cases in which the victim acts *pro se* in Webb County/Laredo.

- 5) The 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court will serve as a liaison and advocate with the Local Board of Judges in order to facilitate training for court-based and court-related personnel to be conducted by representatives of the Casa Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter.
- 6) The Webb County Sheriff's Office, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, and Casa de Misericordia will collaborate in the following manner: assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, facilitation of training for court-based and court-related personnel on the special issues related to the aforementioned crime victims, timely submission of required grant reporting, timely submission of reimbursement request documentation; and any other applicable grant items.
- 7) The planning/development team for the Webb County Sheriff's Office Assistant Chief Julio Gonzalez; Ms. Claudia Lopez, Grants Account Supervisor and Ms. Leticia Espinoza, Grant Accountant Webb County Auditor's Office; and Anita L. Guerra, Webb County Sheriff's Office Grant Writer. The planning/development team for Casa de Misericordia includes Ms. Maria E. (Nena) Arambula, Administrator and Grants Manager; Karen Pfitzer Martinez, Shelter Manager/Data Specialist; and Sister Rosemary Welsh, Casa de Misericordia Executive Director. The planning/development team for the Webb County 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Judge Oscar J. Hale, Jr. and Ms. Arminda Piña, 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Administrator. The planning team also includes Webb County Judge Tano E. Tijerina. These planning and development team members work extremely closely and regularly within their respective organizations both for the general administrative and management functions and for specific grant initiatives. Moreover, members of organizations work with each other's organization on an on-going basis in a cooperative and genuinely mutually beneficial basis in order to best serve the needs of the citizens and residents of Laredo/Webb County. Members of management teams will work together and with grant-funded project staff to ensure all necessary grant requirements are met in a timely manner, including an implementation and close-out meeting.
- 8) Furthermore, Webb County, the Webb County Sheriff's Office, the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, and Casa de Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter are committed to work together in a collaborative manner for planning, developing, implementing, and successfully achieving grant goals and activities and, furthermore, to work to sustain the project once grant funds are no longer available.

#### ***V) Timeline***

The roles and responsibilities described above are contingent on the Webb County Sheriff's Office receiving funds requested for the project described in the OVW grant application. Responsibilities under this Memorandum of Understanding would coincide with the grant period, anticipated to start on October 1, 2022 and continue on for a minimum period of thirty-six (36) months and for the entire duration of the grant award performance period.

**VI) Commitment to Partnership**

- 1) The collaboration service area includes Webb County, including the cities of Laredo, Rio Bravo, El Cenizo; rural communities of Aguilares, Bruni, Mirando, and Oilton; and 47 colonia communities.
- 2) The partners agree to collaborate, including the provision of supervised visitation/safe exchanges of children and youth by and between parents in situations involving domestic violence, dating violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and/or stalking; case management, education, and access to other resources/services to victims of domestic violence, pursuant to the program narrative of the grant application attached to this agreement.
- 3) Through the liaison and partnership from the 406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, court-based and court-related personnel working at and with the Webb County District Courts and County Courts at Law have made commitments to receive the necessary training on the dynamics of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including information on perpetrator behavior, evidence-based risk factors for domestic and dating violence homicide, and on issues relating to the needs of victims, including safety, security, privacy, and confidentiality, including cases in which the victim proceeds pro se in Webb County/Laredo.
- 4) Compensation for Casa Misericordia Domestic Violence Shelter's contribution to this project will be provided as outlined in the attached OVW budget detail worksheet.
- 5) We, the undersigned have read and agree with this MOU. Further, we have reviewed the proposed project and approve it.

Signed by:

Signed by:

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Judge Tano E. Tijerina  
Webb County

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Sr. Rosemary Welsh, RSM, RN,  
Executive Director  
Casa de Misericordia

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Date:

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Date:

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Sheriff Martin Cuellar  
Webb County Sheriff's Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge Oscar J. Hale, Jr.  
406<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

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Date:

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Date: