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2020 RES-085

**AMENDING CONTRACT TO FOCUS COUNSELING, INC.
DCDHS – HAA DIVISION**

Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) Housing Access and Affordability (HAA) Division has a contract with Focus Counseling, Inc. for emergency staffing at hotels where individuals experiencing homelessness are temporarily residing.

The contract for these services needs to be extended beyond its current authorized term to continue services for guests sheltering in hotels from June 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Hotel sheltering has been a critical component of Dane County's pandemic response that has helped achieve the social distancing required to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Dane County's congregate homeless shelter system.

Without the use of hotels to temporarily house individuals experiencing homelessness at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 and families experiencing homelessness, Dane County's existing shelter system cannot provide the space necessary to achieve social distancing unless providers significantly reduce the number of people who can seek emergency shelter at any given time. In addition, without the use of hotels, Dane County's existing shelter system cannot provide proper medical isolation for guests experiencing homelessness who are symptomatic/confirmed for COVID19.

Sustaining hotel sheltering to maintain social distancing requires significant resources and partnerships in order to provide the supports needed for guests to safely and successfully isolate. Beyond an increased need for assistance connecting to basic needs and services, isolation can exacerbate behavioral health needs that must be addressed.

After the initial surge of move-ins at the beginning of the pandemic response, nearly 400 individuals are currently sheltering in hotels. The County's partnership with Focus Counseling has enabled the County to extend hotel sheltering partnerships through the end of the year.

As a result, hotel sheltering now provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring stability to a segment of Dane County's population experiencing homelessness through increased connection to various services, including behavioral health supports and permanent housing. To that end, Focus Counseling's contract extension will include expanded case management services for guests within the budget of their existing contract.

Case management services will include regular contact with hotel guests to assess their needs for various resources (economic assistance, employment and training, behavioral health, medical, housing, etc.) and connect them to resources as needed, continuation of existing psychoeducational programming related to the pandemic, mental health, wellness and/or substance use disorders, connection to the Dane County Homeless Services (HSC) coordinated entry system, assistance with referral/enrollment into long-term case management and/or other behavioral health supports.

52 Case management will be provided in addition to continuing existing Focus Counseling
53 services, including 24/7 staff presence at hotels to help ensure the safety and well-being
54 of guests, connection to basic needs (obtaining identification, mail, clothing, or
55 prescriptions, etc.), and maintenance of the hotel partnership; education and outreach to
56 guests around Public Health Madison – Dane County guidelines to limit spread of and
57 exposure to COVID-19, assistance in screening, referral, and transport of hotel guests
58 who become symptomatic and need to be transferred to medical isolation, and
59 coordinating with other vendors providing services to hotels and to stakeholders
60 supporting the hotel sheltering response.

61
62 Focus Counseling also provides staff support to the medical isolation program to assist
63 guests in adhering to quarantine during their stay. Services include regular telephone
64 outreach to medical isolation guests to assess basic and behavioral health needs and
65 behavioral health needs and connections, service coordination related to the medical
66 isolation program, and the provision of basic needs items to assist guests in adhering to
67 quarantine. The extended contract will also include the provision of direct assistance to
68 help guests access basic needs such as transportation and laundry.

69
70 The contract for these services needs to be extended beyond its current authorized term
71 to continue services for guests in hotels from June 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 at a
72 rate of \$270,646.14 per month, for a total cost of \$1,894,523.

73
74 The need for these services will be evaluated monthly and will be continued as needed.
75 Service level/cost may be reduced as more guests move from hotels into permanent
76 housing.

77
78 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the County Board approves the contract
79 extension for Focus Counseling, Inc. in the amount of \$1,894,523 and authorizes the
80 County Executive and County Clerk to execute the amendment documents, and
81 authorizes the Controller to issue checks for payment of contract invoices.