



To: Silvia Pauling  
From: MC3 – Montgomery County, NY  
Date: 2/13/2023  
Re: Focus Memorandum – Grant No: O-OVW-2021-36006

LIFE at RCIL and Catholic Charities are non-profit organizations operating in Montgomery County, New York. Together we support victims/survivors with disabilities who are experiencing domestic violence in our communities. By combining our experiences and resources we can learn from each other and create a strong partnership that will only enhance the services we offer.

Over the years, the two agencies have collaborated in referral and counseling of victims/survivors with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence. We treat all employees with mutual respect and work together to find satisfactory solutions to those in need.

Life at RCIL provides services to supplement the Core Independent Living Center services of information and referral, individual and systems advocacy; independent living skills; peer counseling, and

transition/deinstitutionalization. Our services are available to people with disabilities and their families in Montgomery County and Fulton County, New York. LIFE at RCIL is headquartered in Utica, NY with branch offices in Herkimer, NY and Amsterdam, NY. LIFE at RCIL provides bilingual, community support services, employment services, and senior care in Oneida, Herkimer, Montgomery, and surrounding counties in New York State.

Independent living centers provide essential services for people with disabilities. They are designed to help consumers navigate the ever-changing services independently and remain fully integrated into the community.

Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Crime Victims Services provides emergency shelter and assistance with securing permanent housing in Montgomery County, NY. This is only a portion of what Catholic Charities does to support individuals in our community. Victims/Survivors also receive non-residential support for their experiences with domestic violence. Both residential and non-residential victims/survivors are offered individual and group counseling sessions, legal advocacy, housing advocacy, transportation, bilingual services, crisis services by walk-in or hotline, emergency assistance, and much more.

Crisis response services provided by Catholic Charities are essential to protect victims and survivors from perpetrators of abuse. They are available 24 hours a day to help victims of emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse, stalking, human trafficking, and sexual abuse. Advocates are on call around the clock to assist clients in creating safety plans and/or helping them flee to a safe space.

We commit to being honest, transparent, and trusting in our dealings with each other so that we can share details about how we can help the individuals we serve. We agree to participate in meaningful conversations

and support community needs so that we can use our experience to expand our knowledge and identify gaps and barriers for improvement. We plan to build a strong foundation by getting to know each other, understanding how each program and staff member works, and teaching each other about the challenges we face every day.

## **Focus Population**

The partnership of LIFE at RCIL, who serves individuals with disabilities, and Catholic Charities whose focus is on crisis response services for domestic violence, provides MC3 the perfect opportunity to work towards the enhancement of services to victims/survivors of domestic violence with all types of disabilities.

The needs assessment will provide us the chance to gain a better insight into the struggles or barriers of our victims/survivor's face when seeking assistance for domestic violence in our community. By comparing our processes, engaging with staff, and holding focus groups with victims/survivors, we will have a better understanding on how we operate from their perspective. We have the unique fortune of meeting with a diverse group of victims/survivors that will allow us to identify opportunities for improvement that we otherwise would have missed.

We also have a large county that also has a population of rural geographic areas that make it difficult to service victims/survivors of domestic violence. The lack of transportation and social dependency in these small communities often make it hard to service. We will collectively focus on recognizing the barriers and gaps that prevent individuals from seeking assistance.

## **Vision Statement**

Domestic Violence survivors in Montgomery County, NY will have access to comprehensive and seamless services, regardless of social status or disability. Our focus will remain person centered by providing a safe, and accessible environment. We understand that there are obstacles to overcome when collaborating with victims/survivors who experience domestic violence in our community. We are committed to improving adaptable and sustainable services.

## **MC3's Mission Statement**

***Provide*** solutions to strategically improve universal accessibility for gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and class equity for all participants.

***Embrace*** each organization's role and gain an understanding of expertise through trust and transparency, so that warm referrals can occur, and no one will be left behind.

***Develop*** tools to reach out, effectively communicate and educate all people with disabilities in Montgomery Country NY about domestic violence abuse and the services we provide.

***Educate*** our domestic violence staff at both LIFE at RCIL and Catholic Charities. We will provide barrier-free crisis and healing services to people with disabilities that are not re-traumatizing to the individuals involved.

***Identify*** ways to preserve our work servicing victims/survivors of domestic violence by creating sustainable change that will continue after this grant is complete.

## **Our Focus**

MC3 is committed to listening to victims/survivors and colleagues so that we have a clear understanding of what is holding us back from aiding those in need. We will seek every possible way to better educate ourselves by:

- Asking the right questions.
- Ensure we have the proper accommodations to communicate with victims/survivors.
- Listen to the feedback so we understand the frustration they may have experienced.
- Identify gaps in our services that can be improved.

We will:

- Leverage the expertise of all MC3 members.
- Communicate frequently and thoughtfully with each collaborator.
- Be open to new, improved suggestions/ideas.
- Provide sustainable suggestions that will provide safe, welcoming, productive services that empower victims/survivors to become independent.

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