



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 18-1025A, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Agreement with Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. to provide legal aid services to Pinellas County residents.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the Agreement with Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. to provide free legal aid to eligible Pinellas County residents.

Strategic Plan:

Ensure Public Health, Safety and Welfare
2.2 Provide services to those in need

Summary:

This agreement provides legal assistance for residents of the County, whose household income does not exceed 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Legal services provided with County dollars include elder law, housing, consumer assistance, public benefits advocacy, family law and domestic violence.

Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) retains 75% of the monthly payment from the County and distributes 12.5% each to Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) and Community Law Program (CLP), in order to reach more residents throughout the County.

Background Information:

Legal Aid Services are a required court-related program under Article V of the Florida Constitution. Funding for this agreement is primarily generated by an additional \$65.00 Court fee on criminal and traffic cases, with 25% of that fee allocated to Legal Aid services. The Board created Section 46-32 of the Pinellas County Code to be able to collect this additional court cost.

The County's legal aid support has been consistent with statutorily defined requirements under Article V. These requirements set funding levels from the base funding year of 2003, with increases of 1.5% annually. In 2011, through the efforts of the Florida Association of Counties, local funding was exempted from the mandated 1.5% increase for a period of six years ending in 2016. The County resumed the 1.5% increase with the FY17 and FY18 renewals. This FY19 Agreement also includes a 1.5% increase.

For the 2017 calendar year, 3,640 legal aid services were provided to citizens where GLS handled 40% of the cases, BALS 37% and CLP 23%. Of those seeking assistance, 63% were female and the top concerns were housing, family and consumer matters.

Fiscal Impact:

The amount of the Agreement is \$373,810.00, payable in 12 monthly payments of \$31,150.83 each.

Article V funding associated with the support of legal services are estimated at \$243,580.00. The balance of the agreement is funded by the General Fund. Funds are included in the FY19 proposed Human Services budget within the Justice Coordination cost center.

Actual fees collected by the Clerk and designated for legal aid in previous years are:

FY13	\$254,810.29
FY14	\$261,917.21
FY15	\$257,761.72
FY16	\$267,433.33
FY17	\$240,714.47
FY18	\$238,920.00 est.

Staff Member Responsible:

Daisy Rodriguez, Director, Human Services

Partners:

Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.
Community Law Program
Bay Area Legal Services

Attachments:

Agreement with Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.
Attachment A - Insurance Requirements