2017 Celebrating Solutions Award Nomination Form

Legal name of organization: Sojourner House

Year established: 1976

Name of program being nominated (if different): LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Year established: 2004

Address: 386 Smith Street

City/State/ZIP code: Providence, RI, 02908

Agency phone number: 401-861-6191

Name and title of contact person: Vanessa Volz, Executive Director

Phone number for contact person: 401-861-6191

E-mail address for contact person: vvolz@sojournerri.org

Website address: www.sojournerri.org

How did you learn about the Celebrating Solutions Awards? We applied previously and were interested in applying for one of other programs this year.

Brief description of organization: The mission of Sojourner House is to provide culturally sensitive support, advocacy, safety, and respect for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence; and to effect systems change. We offer Rhode Island's largest and most comprehensive residential services program for victims and survivors, including a safe shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. In addition to safe housing, we provide supportive services, including support groups, financial literacy classes, bilingual advocacy, case management, immigration advocacy, and programs for children who have witnessed domestic violence. Sojourner House also operates the only drop-in advocacy and resource center in the greater Providence area; offering victims and community members access to support and services when and where they need it most.

Sojourner House was founded in 1976 by a group of concerned women in Rhode Island, most of whom were staff, students, and alumni from Brown University. Sojourner House was partly named after Sojourner Truth, the courageous 19th-century enslaved woman who later became an abolitionist, speaking on behalf of women and slaves as she traveled throughout the United States. Her message of strength and freedom inspires our work. Our goal is to give victims and survivors a place to "sojourn" as some go through the toughest
times of their lives. We've designed our programs so that our clients have many options to choose from, allowing them to build strength and independence as they recover from abuse. All of our programs were created to ensure that families who are experiencing domestic or sexual violence have the support they need to rebuild their lives. Over our 40 year history, Sojourner House has served more than 60,000 individuals. Last year alone we provided 3,350 shelter bed nights and 9,003 transitional housing bed nights for victims fleeing abusive situations. We empower victims to become survivors, and our services are trauma-informed, so that we can meet victims where they are in their recovery journey.

**Geographical area served:** Sojourner House serves victims statewide in Rhode Island. We have locations in Providence and Woonsocket. Located in the Smith Hill neighborhood in Providence, our Drop-In Advocacy and Resource Center is available for any victim or community member to drop-in for information or speak to an advocate. We also offer many of our supportive services at our Drop-In center, including advocacy, support groups, free HIV testing, immigration advocacy, and basic needs assistance. Our shelter is located in a confidential location in Woonsocket. Victims and community members are able to call our Woonsocket location to schedule an appointment with an advocate. We provide services to victims and conduct prevention education presentations statewide. We offer focused outreach to the Providence, Woonsocket, and Northern Rhode Island communities. Our LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program are available to victims, students, and community members statewide. We are the only domestic and sexual violence organization with a dedicated program for the LGBTQ community.

*Is the organization tax-exempt under IRS 501 (c) (3) guidelines or a public agency/unit of government?* Yes

**Please check up to five descriptors that best apply to the program you are nominating:**

- [ ] Batterer Intervention
- [ ] Coalition/collaboration
- [ ] Communication
- [x] Counseling
- [x] Dating violence
- [ ] Elder abuse
- [ ] Employment/training program
- [ ] Faith-based
- [ ] Heath care setting
- [ ] Hotline service
- [ ] Legal aid/assistance
- [x] Prevention
- [ ] Prison based
- [x] Public awareness/education
- [ ] School/youth violence
- [ ] Shelter-based
- [ ] Stalking
- [ ] Technology/Internet service
- [ ] Transitional housing
- [x] Underserved population
- [ ] University setting
- [ ] Victim relocation
- [ ] Workplace Intervention
- [x] Other: Residential Services
Release of Information

As one of the goals of the Mary Byron Project is to disseminate information about cutting edge programs and best practices, we wish to post exemplary Celebrating Solutions Award nominations on our website (www.marybyronproject.org).

Those posted will include the organization's website address, telephone number, and email address. If you have concerns about this request, please address them to kathypaulin@marybyronproject.org, prior to submitting a nomination.

By my signature on this letter, I grant the Mary Byron Project permission to use the contents of my nomination for the Celebrating Solutions Award in the manner and for the purposes set above. I further affirm that I am fully authorized to grant such permission to the Mary Byron Project.

____________________________
Signature

____________________________
Date 2/21/17
Sojourner House LGBTQ Advocacy & Education Program

Mary Byron Project Roth Award 2017 Application

1. **Describe specifically the work of the nominated program and explain how the mission of the program is accomplished. We want to know the “nuts and bolts” of how your program works.**

The mission of Sojourner House is to provide culturally sensitive support, advocacy, safety, and respect for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence; and to effect systems change. Founded in 1976, Sojourner House was partly named after Sojourner Truth, the courageous 19th-century enslaved woman who later became an abolitionist, speaking on behalf of women and slaves as she traveled throughout the United States. Her message of strength and freedom inspires our work. Our goal is to give victims and survivors a place to "sojourn" as some go through the toughest times of their lives. We've designed our programs so that our clients have many options to choose from, allowing them to build strength and independence as they recover from abuse. All of our programs were created to ensure that families who are experiencing domestic or sexual violence have the support they need to rebuild their lives. We empower victims to become survivors, and our services are trauma-informed, so that we can meet victims where they are in their healing journey.

At the heart of Sojourner House's mission is to offer culturally competent services. Staff are trained on working with, communicating with, and meeting the needs of diverse populations. We believe that all of the individuals that we serve and educate deserve to be treated with respect and be offered services that meet their unique needs. We value the strengths inherent in diversity of cultures, lifestyles, and ideas. A quarter of our staff is bilingual in English and Spanish, and a number of our staff and Board of Directors identify as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer). Representing the clients that we serve and creating programs that meet the needs of diverse populations are important to Sojourner House. That is why in 2004 we developed a formalized supportive services program dedicated to individuals who identify as LGBTQ.

Sojourner House's LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program is truly one of a kind. In 2004, Sojourner House was the first and only domestic violence and sexual assault services organization to implement an LGBTQ program. Since then, Sojourner House has expanded its LGBTQ programs and services, and now includes education and training for victims, community members, social service provides, students, schools, and law enforcement; victim advocacy and support for victims who identify as LGBTQ; emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing that is inclusive and available for all individuals regardless of their gender and/or sexuality; sexual health advocacy and free HIV testing; and technical assistance to other community-based organizations, schools, and law enforcement agencies on creating and implementing LGBTQ inclusive policies and environments. The mission of our LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program is to create a community that supports and embraces
individuals who identify as LGBTQ through comprehensive and supportive services for LGBTQ victims and inclusive education for the community.

In addition to our LGBTQ-specific programming, all of our LGBTQ clients are open to our full continuum of housing and supportive services options. We offer shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing to victims who are homeless due to abuse or who are fleeing from domestic and/or sexual violence. The supportive services that we offer include one-on-one advocacy, support groups, empowerment education, financial literacy training, case management, individualized goal plan development, immigration advocacy and assistance with filing for immigration relief, and programs for children who witness domestic violence. All of our LGBTQ clients participate in our intake process, which asks clients about their abuse history, their individual needs, and the goals they want to achieve. Our intake also includes a safety assessment and the development of an individualized safety plan. Assignment to specific programming and staff is based on each client’s unique intake conversation. Clients can stay in our shelter for as long as they need to, and clients can stay enrolled in supportive services as long as they want as well. Our transitional housing is available for up to 24 months, and our permanent supportive housing is available for as long as a victim needs.

In the late 1990s, Sojourner House recognized the correlation between domestic and sexual violence victimization and the contraction of STDs and STIs, including HIV and AIDS. This program served as the foundation for our LGBTQ program, which was developed a few years later. Since then, we have been providing inclusive sexual health advocacy services dedicated to educating clients and community members about practicing safer sex, providing free HIV testing, providing safer sex materials, and incorporating sex-positive questions into our intake and advocacy conversation forms. We conduct outreach in the community to engage community members in sexual health services and to participate in free HIV testing.

In 2015, Sojourner House was the first agency in the state (and still the only) to open a shelter for male identified victims of domestic and sexual violence. In early 2017, due to demand, we doubled the size of the shelter, and can now house 4-8 male victims of domestic and sexual violence. Our Men’s Services Coordinator provides all one-on-one support, advocacy, and case management to our male identified clients living in the shelter and from the community. He runs weekly support groups for male victims, a majority of whom identify as gay, bisexual, trans*, or queer. Having shelter options for male victims is critical. Prior to the development of a shelter for male victims, many male victims were forced to live in unsafe situations, including staying with their abuser, living on the streets or in their car, or engaging in illegal activity to support their housing needs. All of our shelter and housing is inclusive and does not require the identification of sex in order to be accepted. We place individuals in the shelter that is associated with their gender identity.

In 2012, Sojourner House became a member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, and began conducting training across the state on LGBTQ domestic violence. Since
then, we have enhanced the training and have included providing technical assistance on developing LGBTQ inclusive policies, forms, and environments to local schools, community organizations, and law enforcement agencies in the state. In 2016, Sojourner House developed LGBTQ Cultural Competency training for law enforcement that has now been conducted statewide to law enforcement three times. We have also conducted LGBTQ cultural competency training for one local college. The audience included faculty and staff from public safety, student counseling, and health services. Also in 2016, Sojourner House became a member of the newly formed City of Providence LGBTQ Partnership. Consisting of representatives from the Mayor’s office, the police department, and the RI Commission on Prejudice and Bias, the Partnership has been tasked with assisting the City of Providence with becoming more responsive to the needs of the LGBTQ community in Providence. As a part of our membership on the Partnership, Sojourner House will be conducting LGBTQ cultural competency training for all new Providence Police Department recruits at their Academy which starts in February, as well as seasoned officers over the course of 2017.

2. **Describe the most innovative aspects of the program you are nominating for consideration.**

Sojourner House is the only domestic and sexual violence organization in the state that offers shelter and housing for male victims, free HIV testing, sexual health advocacy, and programming specifically dedicated to the LGBTQ community. The LGBTQ community experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence than heterosexual individuals. For example, according to the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 44% of percent of lesbian women and 61% of bisexual women, compared to 35% of heterosexual women, experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and 26% percent of gay men and 37% of bisexual men, compared to 29% of heterosexual men, experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime. Because of these alarming statistics, we developed a program that is responsive to the needs of LGBTQ victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Through client satisfaction surveys, and one-on-one conversations with clients, we were able to identify what programs and services LGBTQ victims and survivors needed and wanted. Many victims told us about their fear of contracting STDs and STIs from an abusive partner, others reported that they wanted to learn how to engage in safer sex practices with a partner who may be controlling how and when they engage in sex. All of them wanted to receive services form an organization that understood LGBTQ issues and made them feel respected. Most wanted the community to be better informed about LGBTQ issues and better equipped to respond to the needs of the LGBTQ in a safe and inclusive way. We listened to our LGBTQ survivors and built our program in direct response to the needs that they identified. We also recognized that training the greater community, including healthcare providers, law enforcement, and educators was an important part of supporting the LGBTQ survivors we worked with. Providing training on LGBTQ cultural competency and assisting organizations with creating forms and policies that
are inclusive was important to us, and a big part of supporting the LGBTQ community as a whole. Our approach to the development of the program, as well as the fact that we are the only victim service agency in the state with programming specifically dedicated to the LGBTQ community demonstrates our innovation.

3. Describe your program’s implementation. What barriers did your organization have to overcome? How did you marshal the necessary resources for implementation?

Our program has been implemented incrementally since we launched our HIV testing program in the late 1990’s. Each year, in response to the growing need, we increased and enhanced services. We recognized in the late 1990’s that many LGBTQ victims felt unsure coming to Sojourner House for services because they did not know if we were a safe organization. We realized that we needed to do more in order to engage the LGBQT community and let them know that we were a safe and supportive environment. It is out of this awareness that we developed our HIV testing program and built our LGBTQ program.

Unfortunately, the stigmas and misconceptions associated with being a member of the LGBTQ community, as well as being a victim of domestic and/or sexual violence, prevent many victims from seeking out services from organizations like Sojourner House. Many victims are not comfortable disclosing abuse, especially those who identify as LGBTQ and are not out to their loved ones. When we first implemented the program, we experienced challenges in developing a client base. Over time, as we conducted more cultural competency training, and as our community grew more knowledgeable about the realities that victims and the LGBTQ communities faced, we began to serve more clients.

We developed relationships with other organizations serving the LGBTQ community in the state, but who were not familiar with victimization and the dynamics of abuse, including Youth Pride, a community-based grass-roots organization for LGBTQ youth; Project Weber/RENEW, a community-based organization that conducts outreach, case management, and peer support services to individuals who are engaged in sex work; and the Center for Sexual Health and Pleasure, an organization dedicated to educating individuals about positive and healthy expressions of sex and sexuality. Through these relationships, we were able to cross-train staff—helping their staff to understand the dynamics of abuse and helping our staff to better understand the issues facing the LGBTQ community. Because of those relationships, referrals to our programs increased, and we were able to enhance our programs and offer more resources to LGBTQ victims. Additionally, we developed a relationship with Options Magazine, the only LGBTQ monthly publication in the state. Options Magazine promotes our programs each month in their resources sections and includes coverage on our events, services, and programs frequently throughout the year. Finally, this past year we developed an outreach campaign specifically for our LGBTQ programming. We created inclusive postcards and posters with the campaign slogan “We Deserve to Exist” and distributed them throughout the community.
Over the years, our funding for our LGBTQ program has grown and we have been able to diversify funding that supports it. Initially, we received small amounts of private foundation funding to support our HIV testing. Now we have funds from the state Department of Health, a national corporate foundation that supports HIV initiatives, local private foundations, a fund from a local community foundation dedicated to supporting LGBTQ issues and project, and funds from private donors and special event revenue.

4. **How do you know the nominated program is successful? Please site two examples. Although anecdotal examples are helpful, at least one example must include quantitative data.**

Each year, we have experienced an increase in the numbers of LGBTQ clients served. In 2015, we served approximately 20 LGBTQ clients, and in 2016 approximately 35 LGBTQ clients. Our LGBTQ program is also helping LGBTQ victims with long-term outcomes. In fact, one client story described here, speaks to how much our program can assist victims with improving their lives. In May of 2016, a gay man, who was also undocumented, reached out to Sojourner House for assistance with obtaining immigration relief. He was a victim of physical, emotional, and financial abuse, at the hands of his husband. Recognizing that he needed more support, our Immigration Advocacy Manager referred this client to our Men’s Services Coordinator. Our Men’s Services Coordinator provided individual advocacy, support, domestic violence education, and empowerment education. Additionally, we assisted this client with opening his own, and first, bank account. The immigration relief that our Immigration Advocacy Manager was able to apply for on his behalf and assist him with has now opened him up to supportive benefits, including a work permit, which he obtained at the end of 2016. This client is now working, living independently in one of our supportive housing apartments, and is actively exploring divorce options. Over the course of working with this client, our staff has seen his self-esteem, self-confidence, and ability to be self-sufficient grow immensely.

Training and technical assistance on LGBTQ cultural competency has also increased significantly over the past few years. In 2012, we were only providing training and education on how abuse impacts the LGBTQ community. Since 2012, we have expanded our training and education and now provide training and technical assistance to organizations on how to create LGBTQ inclusive environments. At the request of the RI Municipal Police Academy, we developed and conducted two statewide in-service trainings for law enforcement in Rhode Island on LGBTQ cultural competency. Almost 40 police officers were trained on how to respond to and communicate effectively with the LGBTQ community. Also in 2016, various organizations, including police agencies and social service providers, have asked Sojourner House staff to assist them with the development of LGBTQ inclusive forms and policies.

Sojourner House’s residential program intake policies are also low-barrier. We do not turn anyone away from shelter or housing unless there is a safety concern. Because we have shelter for both males and females, all individuals, regardless of how they identify, can be served in our residential program. Other domestic violence shelters in the state do not do this. Additionally,
we do not ask for any verification of sex or gender. We place individuals in the shelter that they are most comfortable being in, and we have served numerous trans* individuals in our shelters over the past few years. Because of our inclusive policies, we were asked by the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence to provide training for shelter providers in the state on serving trans* individuals and creating inclusive shelter policies. Over 20 shelter providers attended the training.

Finally, for many years, Sojourner House has been offering sexual health, LGBTQ, and teen dating violence education to students around the state. Many schools have developed gay-straight alliances in response to community needs and in response to our training. Beginning two years ago, five school-based gay-straight alliances from around the state contacted Sojourner House for more in-depth supportive services and training for their student group. In response, Sojourner House provided training series and support group sessions to gay-straight alliance members throughout the state, educating them on practicing safer sex, supporting student victims, and engaging them in important anti-violence and anti-hate conversations.

5. If funding were not an issue, what (if any) changes or additions would you make to the nominated program in the future? What are the long term goals for your program? We are interested in hearing both your practical goals in addition to any lofty dreams you have for the future.

If funding were not an issue, we would expand our programming even further and hire full-time staff dedicated to developing more LGBTQ and sexual health programming for students in Rhode Island, more LGBTQ cultural competency training and technical assistance for organizations in Rhode Island, and supportive services for LGBTQ victims.

Our long-term goals are to reduce the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence experienced by LGBTQ individuals, to increase LGBTQ cultural competency training for service and healthcare providers in the state, to increase LGBTQ cultural competency training for all law enforcement in the state, and to increase LGBTQ domestic violence education and LGBTQ cultural competency training for students in the state. One day, we hope that LGBTQ cultural competency training becomes mandated for all service providers, medical providers, law enforcement, and educators.

6. Who are your key community partners? What are their roles?

Sojourner House is a member of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless. We work closely with our other member agencies to house and support victims. Many of our other member agencies make referrals to our LGBTQ program and contact us for insight and advice on LGBTQ cultural competency. We work closely with Options Magazine, Youth Pride, and RI Pride, the organization that is in charge of hosting Providence’s annual Pride Festival, to promote our programs to the LGBTQ community. We also work with other local community-based organizations, including Project
Weber/RENEW, the Center for Sexual Health and Pleasure, mental health and substance use organizations, health centers, and community action programs to promote our programs and engage LGBTQ victims in services. Additionally, we work closely with local law enforcement, and our Providence LGBTQ Partnership partners (Providence Police Department, City of Providence Office of the Mayor, and the Commission on Prejudice and Bias) to address LGBTQ cultural competency issues in the city of Providence. Finally, we have maintained our membership and relationship with the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, receiving support and assistance with developing our LGBTQ services and training programs.

7. **Could/should your program be replicated in other areas of the country? Why?**

Yes, we believe that other domestic violence and sexual assault providers in the country could, and should, develop programming dedicated to serving the LGBTQ community and educating the greater community about LGBTQ cultural competency. All victims, regardless of their gender, sex, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, or socioeconomic status should be able to receive services that fit their diverse and unique needs. We believe that there is no cookie-cutter approach to serving victims of domestic violence. As an agency, we operate from an empowerment model, meeting victims where they are in their journey and offering them programs and services that they need and want. We recognize that victims who identify as LGBTQ have unique needs that general advocacy and support may not comprehensively address. Organizations across the nation who believe in serving and empowering all victims must do so in a manner that is culturally competent and inclusive.

Organizations who want to start LGBTQ programs should develop relationships with other local organizations serving the LGBTQ community as well as the National Coalition of Anti-Violence programs. Organizations should also hold LGBTQ community conversations and/or conduct a needs assessment, determining whether or not they are meeting the needs of their current LGBTQ clients and the LGBTQ community. Providing training and education on domestic violence and sexual assault in the LGBTQ community is a good place to start building those relationships with the LGBTQ community in your area.

8. **Does your agency have a workplace policy that addresses domestic violence? If so, please include a copy.**

Yes, please see the attached policy included with this proposal.

9. **Has the agency and/or nominated program received VAWA funding? (“Yes” or “No” is sufficient)**

As a member of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Sojourner House receives pass-through VAWA funds as a sub-contract. Sojourner House uses VAWA funds to support its shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.
Roth Award Additional Questions:

1. How do you determine that the population you serve qualifies as “underserved”?

The National Violence Against Women survey, conducted in 2013 by the U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Justice, found that 21.5% of men and 35.4% of women living with a same-sex partner experienced intimate-partner physical violence in their lifetimes. The results of a 2011 national survey conducted by The National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce indicated that one in five trans* people experience IPV. LGBTQ victims face many barriers when it comes to leaving an abusive relationship, seeking out supportive services, or reporting the abuse to police. The fear of now knowing if a professional is supportive of the LGBTQ community cause many LGBTQ victims to stay silent. Many LGBTQ victims have experienced homophobia from friends, families, institutions, and society. It is hard for many LGBTQ individuals to identify who a safe and accepting person is. The fear of not being believed or being blamed causes many victims of domestic violence to stay silent. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ are already a traditionally underserved population. Add the occurrence of violence in their relationship or sexual assault, and the barriers to receiving support and services increase even more.

2. Why do your clients need resources that are structured specifically for them?

In a survey of LGBTQ victims of crime, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reports that only 47.26% of LGBTQ victims received a courteous and respectful response from law enforcement when they reported their crime. The remaining 52.74% responses were either indifferent or hostile. In that same survey, just over half of the LGBTQ crime victims actually reported their crime to the police. This statistic is unacceptable. Many LGBTQ victims of domestic violence are fearful to report to police or seek out services because they believe that no one will believe them and that they will be treated disrespectfully because of their sexuality or gender identity. Having programs that are specifically dedicated to LGBTQ victims is critical. It sends the message to LGBTQ victims that we care, that we respect them, and that we believe them. It also sends the message that we believe that LGBTQ individuals have specific needs that general programming cannot meet. Having specialized services, and not just a general cookie-cutter approach, helps LGBTQ victims to feel safe, feel empowered, and feel accepted and acknowledged by their communities—all of which are important parts of supporting LGBTQ victims while they build a life free from abuse.
Employee Domestic Violence Policy and Procedure
Sojourner House

Employee Domestic Violence Policy and Procedure
Guidelines for Increasing Safety and Providing Support

**Purpose:** To assure that employees of Sojourner House who are or may become victims of domestic violence are appropriately identified and served.

**Definition:** Domestic Violence (DV) is a pattern of coercive control of an intimate partner founded in violence. This can include physical, sexual, and psychological emotional or economic abuse. Each form places the victim at risk of injury— including death. The intent of these actions is to gain control by making the partner feel subordinate, incompetent, worthless and fearful.

**Procedure:** Supervisors and staff members shall be sensitive to and respectful of the needs, expectations and choices of fellow Sojourner House employees who are or may be victims of domestic violence.

The following information is provided to help supervisors interact with employees of Sojourner House who are victims of domestic violence and to help those employees obtain the services they desire. It is important to understand that an employee may not be ready to admit that she or he has been injured by a partner or family member and may choose not to discuss the topic. Supervisors should respect this decision, but should impart information about available resources in the community.

**Guiding Principles:**

1. Treat employees with dignity, respect, and compassion and with sensitivity to age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation, while recognizing that domestic violence is unacceptable in any relationship.
2. Recognize that the process of leaving a violent relationship is often a long and gradual one.
3. Regard the safety of victims and their children as priority.
4. As with any other personal concern of an employee’s, we must take great care to treat domestic violence with this same confidentiality

**Domestic Violence Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors:**

1. What To Do If You Suspect an Employee May Be Being Abused
Knowing what to say to an employee and how to say it in a way that is respectful of her privacy is one of the most challenging aspects of domestic violence. It is always appropriate for a supervisor to show concern for an employee who seems distressed, and to support the employee in getting professional help. You should not try to diagnose the employee’s problem; rather, make it clear that it is her or his choice whether or not to confide in you.

2. Guidelines for Supervisors If an Employee Self Discloses Abuse

A. Communicate your concerns for her or his safety and the safety of any children. Ask her or him if they are safe in her home.
B. Acknowledge injustice: “There is no excuse for domestic violence,” “this is not your fault; the abuser is responsible for his behavior.”
C. Resist temptation to dictate the employee's safety; she or he is the best judge about what will keep her safe and there are risks on the path to safety.

D. Encourage the employee to seek help through any of the following:
   - Coastline Employee Assistance Program 1-800-455-1195
   - National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE
   - RICADV Victims of Crime Helpline 1-800-494-8100

E. Most important, do not ignore the situation. If workplace intervention is appropriate, either at the employee's request or to respond to a threat to the workplace, early intervention can provide advantages. In many cases, early intervention can prevent an incident of violence that could devastate the entire workplace. Work may be the only resource an employee has left.

F. Maintain your relationship as her supervisor, and not the role of counselor. Any discussions about performance related to domestic violence should be balanced, supportive and consider the employees right to privacy.

3. Workplace Flexibilities

Employees threatened by domestic violence may need time off to go to court, find a new place to live, or recover from injuries. They may need a different workspace or different schedule to keep the abusers from tracking them down on the job. They may need their phone calls screened, a workstation that is not conspicuous to visitors, or additional security at their worksites.

Supervisors should first contact the Executive Director when considering the use of personnel flexibilities.

A. Time Off

(1) Employees can access Sojourner House’s Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for time off if necessary. Refer to the Employee Handbook for more details.

(2) Vacation, Personal and Sick Leave: Sojourner House employees can also access either vacation, personal, or sick paid time off for any incident related to a domestic violence injury. In cases of domestic violence, employees need not receive prior approval for taking paid vacation time.
Sojourner House
LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Semi-finalist Information
1. **Letter of Support**: Letters of support from the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Project Weber/RENEW, and the Rhode Island Foundation can be found in Attachment A of this follow-up application.

2. **IRS 501(c)(3) documentation**: Sojourner House’s IRS Determination Letter can be found in Attachment B of this follow-up application.

3. **Previous Year’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program Budget**: Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program Budget for FY17 can be found in Attachment C of this follow-up application.

4. **Follow-Up Questions**:
   1. **What is the approximate number of individuals served annually by LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program?** Approximately ten percent of the total number of clients that we serve each year self-identify as LGBTQ. In 2015 we served 20 clients through direct services in our LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program. In 2016, we served 35 LGBTQ victims in the program, and so far this year, we have served 25. In addition to clients served, we provide training, education, and technical assistance to various professionals in the state. So far this calendar year, we have provided 14 LGBTQ cultural competency presentations to over 200 individuals, including police, professionals, advocates, and students in RI.

   2. **How many paid staff and volunteers are used to administer LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program?** All of Sojourner House’s staff and volunteers are trained to support and work with victims who identify as LGBTQ. LGBTQ cultural competency training is a requirement of new employee and volunteer orientation training. We have one full-time Manager of LGBTQ Programs dedicated to conducting outreach to and serving our LGBTQ clients and male-identified clients. Additionally, our Prevention Education Coordinator and our Director of Operations both develop and conduct LGBTQ training for professionals and students in RI.

   3. **Are there past awards, accolades, and grants furnished upon the applicant or nominee which would further exemplify its success in combating intimate partner violence?** Although Sojourner House has not received past awards or recognized accolades specifically for our LGBTQ programming, we have received consisting funding from the state’s only LGBTQ specific funding source – Rhode Island Foundation’s Equity Action Grant. Year after year the work that Sojourner House is doing to support LGBTQ victims of domestic and sexual
violence is recognized by the Rhode Island Foundation as an important and sustainable program. In fact, the Equity Action Program Office supplied a letter of support for this application, which demonstrates their commitment to our project and their belief that our program is worthy of continued support. Additionally, other victim service organizations in the state turn to Sojourner House for support and assistance with LGBTQ issues and refer victims and professionals to Sojourner House for LGBTQ services and training. Finally, Sojourner House has received additional funds from some of the state’s block and formula grants dedicated to supporting victims of abuse and their children due to our LGBTQ programming.

Sojourner House has also received statewide awards for other programs and services. In 2016, the Rhode Island Foundation’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence awarded Sojourner House with an Innovation Award for our Immigration Advocacy Program. Also in 2016, Providence Business News selected Sojourner House as its recipient of the Excellence at a Social Service Agency award.

4. **In what ways is the composition of your staff and Board of Directors reflective of your client population?** Sojourner House’s staff and Board of Directors reflects the clients and the communities that we serve. Sojourner House is an equal opportunity employer. Hiring staff and recruiting volunteers that represent the community that we aim to serve is a priority of ours. Approximately one quarter of our staff is bi-lingual in English and Spanish, and a quarter of our staff also identify as LGBTQ. Our board of directors and volunteers also represent diverse backgrounds, including people of color and members of the LGBTQ community. We also have victims and survivors represented on our board of director and on our advisory board. All of our printed and online materials are bilingual and are inclusive. We also have a specific space dedicated on our website to LGBTQ issues and sexual health. In 2017, we developed an LGBTQ outreach campaign with inclusive materials that represented the LGBTQ community. Our philosophy is rooted in the belief that every person deserves to live a life free from abuse. We believe that all victims and survivors should be treated equally and should be given access to supports and services that best fit their unique and diverse needs.

5. **The Celebrating Solutions Awards application states, “In 2004 Sojourner House was the first and only domestic violence and sexual assault services program to implement an LGBTQ program.” To what geographic area does this statement refer?** In 2004, Sojourner House was the first, and remains the only, domestic and sexual violence organization in the state of Rhode Island that has a program specifically dedicated to the LGBTQ community. Although other victim service organizations provide services to and support LGBTQ victims, Sojourner House is the only one with a dedicated program, resources, and outreach materials that are specifically for members of the LGBTQ community. We strive to be inclusive and to provide services that meet the diverse needs of all
community members, however, we recognized the importance of having programming specifically for individuals who identify as LGBTQ as a part of our continuum. From the information gained in our client satisfaction surveys, and from victims we have worked with, the need for LGBTQ-specific programming was evident. LGBTQ victims expressed having unique needs that general programming does not cover – including LGBTQ support groups, sexual health advocacy, HIV testing, and support from staff who identify themselves as LGBTQ. We developed our LGBTQ programming in direct response to the needs identified by LGBTQ victims, and we continue to expand and modify our programming on a consistent basis based on the voices of LGBTQ victims.

6. Have any changes in governmental policy impacted your agency’s ability to provide services and respond to the needs of your clients? If so, please describe. Governmental policy in Rhode Island has not negatively impacted our ability to provide this important program at this time. In fact, we believe that past policies have positively impacted our program and helped us to support more LGBTQ victims that ever before. Rhode Island is one of 19 states in the country that does not discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, our hate crimes statute includes bias based on actual or perceived sexuality and gender identity, and Rhode Island passed marriage equality before the federal recognition of it. After the Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016, law enforcement in Rhode Island wanted to be supportive of the LGBTQ community and provide extra presence at the annual Pride Festival, which was held only one week after the massacre. The LGBTQ community had mixed feelings about this offer. Some members wanted police presence, while others did not due to the history of violence against the LGBTQ community perpetrated by police across the country. When police became aware of this divide, they wanted to understand the issues better and be better informed. This in turn launched the Providence LGBTQ partnership, which includes members from Sojourner House, Providence Police Department, and Providence Mayor’s office. This partnership focuses on helping the Providence Police Department and the City of Providence to be more inclusive and respond more effectively to the needs of the LGBTQ community. Since its implementation, all new Providence police recruits have received LGBTQ cultural competency training from Sojourner House staff, all existing officers will be participating in LGBTQ cultural competency training in January conducted by Sojourner House staff, and two police departments in the state have created LGBQ liaison positions. In fact, a trans woman that we work with recently stated that she has now moved back to Providence because of their efforts in educating themselves about LGBTQ issues. Although this example is not policy driven, it does demonstrate how getting elected and governmental officials/representatives on board with promoting and supporting LGBTQ issues can positively impact the LGBTQ community and engage the community in Sojourner House’s LGBTQ programming.

7. Does the wide spectrum of services provided to those who identify as LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault include legal
representation and court advocacy? Sojourner House provides legal and
criminal justice advocacy, which includes police statement and court
accompaniment, as well as criminal justice case management. We can walk
victims through the criminal justice process, provide them with case updates, and
answer their legal questions. We also provide immigration advocacy and can
assist undocumented and refugee clients with obtaining immigration relief
through the US Department of Immigration Appeals.

8. Is the shelter for male identified victims of domestic violence and sexual
assault open to heterosexual men as well as those who identify as gay,
bisexual, trans and queer? What is the eligibility criteria for admission to
this shelter? Do you also offer transitional and long term housing for
LGBTQ domestic violence survivors? Are you also able to house the
children of the male victims? Our men’s shelter is available to cisgender and
transgender men, as well as to heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men. To be
eligible for our men’s shelter, clients must be fleeing an abusive situation, be
homeless because of an abusive situation, or have no safe place to live due to
abuse. Because we have two separate spaces for our men’s shelter, we are able to
house and accommodate men with children, and in the past year, we have housed
two men who have had a child come with them into our program. We have the
largest and most comprehensive residential services program for victims of
domestic and sexual violence in Rhode Island, which includes transitional
housing, permanent supportive housing, and rapid re-housing, all of which
provide victims with an apartment of their own with subsidized rent and
supportive services. All of our transitional housing, permanent supportive
housing, and rapid re-housing programs are available to our male clients also.

9. In addition to client services and education, have you undertaken any
initiatives specifically focused on prevention of domestic violence in the
LGBTQ community? Sojourner House develops and provides prevention
education classes to youth throughout the state. In fact, we are a recipient of a
Rhode Island Prevention Fund grant, which was established in 2016 by the Rhode
Island General Assembly to fund projects, through the Rhode Island Coalition
Against Domestic Violence, that promote evidence-informed primary prevention
programs in Rhode Island aimed at stopping intimate partner violence before it
starts. As a part of our prevention programming, we teach youth from middle
schools, high schools, and colleges about the dynamics of abuse, the red flags and
warning signs of abuse, and how to positively intervene to prevent violence and
support victims. Our programming is inclusive and always includes prevention
pieces specifically for the LGBTQ community. We also provide LGBTQ-specific
prevention education programming for students and teachers. This summer we
were contacted by a local school district who wanted their staff to receive training
specifically on supporting LGBTQ victims, addressing LGBTQ domestic
violence, and preventing LGBTQ domestic violence in their schools. As a part of
our Prevention Fund grant, we train youth to become peer-advocates and violence
prevention leaders in their communities and schools. This peer advocacy training
is inclusive and incorporates LGBTQ cultural competency, supporting LGBQT victims, and preventing LGBTQ domestic violence. We work in conjunction with Rhode Island’s LGBTQ youth community center and community-based organization – Youth Pride RI – to support LGBTQ victims and to provide abuse prevention programming to their youth participants. Youth Pride was also a dedicated site for our Peer Advocacy program. We have worked closely with many Gender-Sexuality Alliances (formerly Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs) in the state to provide education and support to student members. We worked with the GSAs to develop a survey of LGBTQ students to assess their needs and understand the programming and support that they need around abuse and violence. Finally, we developed an outreach campaign specifically targeted at educating the community about LGBTQ domestic/sexual violence and engaging the LGBTQ community in our services. As a part of this campaign, we engaged in critical community conversations about abuse in the LGBTQ community, how to recognize the warning signs, how to support LGBTQ victims, and how to prevent domestic/sexual violence in the LGBTQ community. These conversations helped us to engage social service providers, community members, medical professionals, and others in our efforts to support victims and eliminate violence in the LGBTQ community in Rhode Island.

10. **Do you offer outreach and services to immigrant, refugee or non-English speaking LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence?** Sojourner House staff are able to communicate in English, Spanish, and Arabic. All of our online and written materials are available in English and Spanish. For all other languages, Sojourner House utilizes other translation resources, including the state language line and the translation/interpretation program at the Dorcas International Institute, one of longstanding community partners. Sojourner House is the only domestic and sexual violence organization in the state with an immigration advocacy program. Our Immigration Advocacy Manager is certified by the Department of Justice to assist undocumented and refugee victims with applying for and obtaining immigration relief, including U Visas, T Visas, VAWA Self-Petitions, and asylum. Since the program’s inception in 2012, we have assisted over 150 victims apply for and/or obtain immigration relief. In addition to directly supporting and assisting immigration and refugee victims, our Immigration Advocacy Manager also conducts outreach to and training for local community organizations, law enforcement, and prosecutors in the state on the program, its benefits, and how to support undocumented victims. Our Immigration Advocacy Program was selected as the recipient of the Innovation Award by the Rhode Island Foundation’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence in 2016.

11. **Please describe the ways in which the safety of the victims/survivors is assessed while survivors are receiving services. Are danger or lethality assessments conducted at any time during the intake process or while the client is receiving shelter and services?** Every time a victim calls Sojourner House, they are asked about their safety and whether or not they feel safe. For
those victims living in our shelter, safety and risk assessments are done on an ongoing, and frequent basis, which for most cases, happen on a daily basis due to the frequent contact staff have with the victims living in our shelter. For those clients living in our housing programs, safety and risk assessments are done at each advocacy meeting, usually once every week or every-other week. For those clients living in the community, safety and risk assessments are done on an as needed basis. At each client interaction, an advocate asks the victim about their safety and whether or not they feel safe. If a victim indicates that they do not feel safe, a plan is developed, with input from the victim, to help them identify safety issues and implement a plan to help them feel safe. All of our advocates are trained to identify risk/dangerousness/lethality red flags. Our staff pay close attention to those red flags and engage victims in critical conversations about their safety and risk of lethality. If any case has numerous red flags, a referral to Sojourner House’s Law Enforcement Advocate and/or the state’s Critical Case Review Team is made. The Law Enforcement Advocate works directly with law enforcement to support victims. The state’s Critical Case Review Team is made up of various professionals, including advocates, probation officers, prosecutors, and pre-trial service staff, and reviews cases that have been identified by victim advocates and law enforcement professionals as cases with the potential for increased risk and lethality.

12. Please feel free to briefly share any additional information about your program that may be helpful for our reviewers to know. Many of the programs and services that we have developed have been developed in direct response to the needs identified by victims. We consistently assess and evaluate our programs and the needs of victims through client satisfaction surveys and community assessments. Each year, as we apply for additional Equity Action money, we develop our proposal based on the feedback and direct conversations we have with members of the LGBTQ community. A few years ago, LGBTQ victims identified the need for a shelter specifically for male-identified clients. From those conversations, we were able to secure funding for and develop the first shelter for male-identified victims of abuse. Last year, our LGBTQ clients indicated that there was a lack of support groups and services specifically for lesbian and bisexual women. In response, we are in the process of implementing a support group specifically for lesbian and bisexual women. We are consistently assessing and evaluating the needs of those that we serve. It is important to us that we incorporate the voices of victims into our program planning and implementation, and that we do not create programs without their input.

13. Please provide copies of any evaluation forms, screening tools or assessments used to determine client eligibility. Sojourner House utilizes a First Conversation Form to determine client eligibility. The First Conversation Form can be found in Attachment D of this application. The First Conversation Form asks clients about their safety, their needs, and their eligibility. One the client is deemed appropriate for the program based on the First Conversation Form, a thorough intake is completed. The intake helps us to collect critical information,
including information on demographics and the victimization they experienced. It also assists us in determining the client’s goals and needs, and begins to lay out the personalized plan that will be developed with the client in order to achieve their goals. Clients eligible for our residential programs include those who are homeless due to abuse, those who are fleeing an abusive situation, or victims of abuse who do not have a safe place to stay. Any victim who self-identifies as a victim of domestic or sexual violence is eligible for our community based programs, including advocacy, support group, financial literacy education, etc.

14. Please include copies of any tools or forms used for safety planning with clients and determining danger and/or lethality. Our First Conversation form, which also serves as our client eligibility form, also collects information and asks questions about safety and risk assessment. We ask clients as a part of this initial conversation about threats, access to weapons, increases in violence, and the severity of violence. Clients enrolled in our residential programs meet with an advocate once a week or once every-other-week, depending on their needs, to review their individualized goal plans and to provide support. As a part of these meetings, safety is consistently addressed and risk of lethality is frequently assessed. For our community based clients, we assess for safety at each visit by asking questions related to their abuser, the abuser’s behaviors, and any changes in the pattern or frequency of violence. Our First Conversation Form can be found in Attachment D.

Staff also develop a safety plan with each client. The safety plan can be found in Attachment E of this application. Sojourner House’s safety plan is a living document, which means it is updated and changed as the client’s needs are updated and change. At the first meeting with a client, the safety plan is completed. Our safety plan asks about access to weapons, threats of violence, threats towards children and/or pets, etc. The plan also allows the victim to plan out and think about other options when their safety is in jeopardy. For example, the plan lays out various scenarios, including how to keep themselves safe at work, while at shelter, while living with family, and with a restraining order. The plan also helps victims to identify strategies that can help them to feel safe, including leaving some personal belongings with a loved one, keeping track of important documents and phone numbers, who they can turn to if they need help, etc.

Finally, the state of Rhode Island has a High Risk Assessment Team that meets on a monthly basis. Any victim advocate in the state can refer a case to the team for review. The coordinators of the team include representatives from R.I.’s Probation Department and Pre-Trial Services Unit. Members of the committee have been certified to conduct The Dangerousness Assessment – Jacquelyn Campbell’s risk assessment. The Dangerousness Assessment, developed by Campbell in 1986, is a nationally recognized tool that is used to help determine the level of danger and the likelihood for increased violence, including homicide, in abusive relationships.
Follow-Up Application: Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions and Roth Awards

Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Attachment A

Letters of Support
October 2, 2017

Marcia Roth
Executive Director
The Mary Byron Project
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY, 40223

Dear Ms. Roth:

I am pleased to provide a letter of support for the Sojourner House in regards to The Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions Award for LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program. I understand this is a competitive award program, with Sojourner House progressing to the semi-finalist round in a field of over a hundred applications. I hope that this letter of support assists you in your consideration of the LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program and Sojourner House as a deserving candidate and awardee.

As one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the country, and most comprehensive funder of nonprofit organizations in the state, the Rhode Island Foundation has a proud tradition of serving and working on behalf of the community. The Sojourner House has received numerous grants since 1989, from several unique grant programs and donor advised funds. As well, the Sojourner House has received numerous grants through the Foundation’s Equity Action Fund in support of LGBTQ services and programming. The Equity Action Fund is committed to enacting social change by championing initiatives and organizations that encourage justice for, provide support to, and improve the quality of life of LGBTQ Rhode Islanders. The Equity Action Fund grant program is highly competitive and recommendations are made by a committee representing the LGBTQ community. The most recent grant, awarded in 2017, provided funding for Sojourner’s LGBTQ+ Intimate Partner Violence Program. Perhaps also of interest is the Best Practice Award for Innovation that Sojourner House received in 2016 through the Foundation’s Innovation for Nonprofit Excellence program.

As the only domestic violence and sexual violence organization in the state with a program specifically dedicated to the LGBTQ community, Sojourner House has the competency to not only deliver the services needed by the community, but is able to influence and support other community and public service agencies seeking to support the unique needs of the LGBTQ community. The organization’s partnerships and collaborations are extensive; from schools and municipalities, to police departments and community health providers. The LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program provides comprehensive services, education and outreach; offering emergency shelter, free HIV testing, and technical assistance to community-based
organizations, including LGBTQ cultural competency training for law enforcement. The Sojourner House has not only identified a need within the community and established a program to address those needs, but has built a program that has become part of its core programming, working diligently to secure funding through federal and local resources. Sojourner House is guided by an impressive board, led by a highly regarded executive director, and supported by talented and dedicated staff.

Ms. Roth, we are grateful that the Sojourner House is being considered for recognition by The Mary Byron Project, through the Celebrating Solutions Award program. No doubt there are many programs across the country deserving of recognition. Of course we hope that the Sojourner House will receive the recognition it deserves for the important work undertaken here in Rhode Island. We are proud to be associated an organization that is being considered for such an important award.

Thank you for accepting this letter of support. Please do not hesitate to contact me should I be able to offer any additional information. I can be reached at jdavid@rifoundation.org or (401) 427-4005.

Regards,

Jessica David
Senior Vice President of Strategy & Community Investments
September 27, 2017

Marcia Roth
Executive Director
The Mary Byron Project
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Ms. Roth:

I am writing this letter of support to urge your consideration of Sojourner House’s application to be awarded the Celebrating Solutions Award for their LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program. I know how competitive this award is, since our task force of survivors (SOAR) was selected as an awardee several years ago, and am pleased to be able to voice my vote of confidence for Sojourner House’s program.

Sojourner House has been in the forefront of the domestic violence movement in Rhode Island since its inception, and was one of the founding members of our statewide Coalition. It is the only domestic violence agency in the state with a program specifically dedicated to the LGBTQ community, and it has built a solid reputation among the LGBTQ communities over the years based on its integrity of programming, consistency of service and commitment to addressing the needs in a culturally appropriate way. Even before there was any dedicated funding for these services, Sojourner had developed a reputation within the community as being allied with the LGBTQ community, and has built strong partnerships with Project AIDS, Youth Pride, Pride RI and Project Weber/RENEW.

One of the needs that has been identified in the community is for more training within the police departments related to LGBTQ cultural competency. Sojourner House has experience training in this area, having recently conducted training for the new police recruits. Sojourner House has plans to take this training program into the full Providence Police force, which is the largest department in the state.

I generally write brief letters of support when writing such letters for colleagues who are applying for grants; however, in this case, I feel that it is important to fully express the extraordinary work that Sojourner House has done in this area. Sojourner’s sexual health and free HIV testing program has been offered for over a decade, and was initially introduced before any other domestic violence programs in the area were making
connections between HIV risk and domestic violence. In addition, Sojourner House recently expanded its shelter program and opened a shelter specifically for male-identified victims of abuse. The innovative nature of Sojourner House’s work with this community, and their strong collaborative history working with diverse communities is well deserving of this national recognition.

If you would like any additional information, you can contact me here at 401-467-9940, or through email at debare@ricadv.org or by mail at 422 Post Road, Warwick, RI 02888.

Thank you again for your consideration; I strongly urge you to award Sojourner House this prestigious honor.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Deborah DeBare
Executive Director
October 3, 2017

Marcia Roth
Executive Director
The Mary Byron Project
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

RE: Letter of Support, Celebrating Solutions Award

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to provide my enthusiastic support for Sojourner House in the organization’s application to The Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions Award for its LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program.

I am the Executive Director of Project Weber/RENEW, a nonprofit organization delivering peer-driven direct services to sex workers and other persons, of all genders, who are at high risk for sex work, substance use, homelessness, and HIV. Project Weber/RENEW offers rapid HIV and hepatitis C virus testing, condoms and safer sex materials, syringe exchange and injection kit disposal, overdose reversal medications (Narcan/Naloxone), harm reduction counseling, and supported referrals, via street-based and on-site outreach delivered by peers, confidentially and free of charge. The mission and values of Sojourner House are closely aligned with those of Project Weber/RENEW, which facilitates a close collaborative relationship between our organizations.

Project Weber/RENEW’s client population is diverse in age, race and ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation and behavior; a majority of our clients are engaged in or in recovery from substance use, and a large number of are living with HIV. Domestic violence is not an uncommon experience among our clients. I cannot understate the value of Sojourner House as a referral site for our clients who are facing domestic violence. Similarly, we are glad to provide direct services and advocacy for individuals referred to Project Weber/RENEW from Sojourner House.
More recently, our two organizations had the opportunity to advance our combined efforts to promote equitable, inclusive services for survivors of domestic violence through the THEIA Project. The THEIA Project is a supportive transitional housing program for adult male and female survivors of human trafficking – the first of its kind in Rhode Island. This collaborative initiative combines the services and resources of Project Weber/RENEW and Sojourner House to provide temporary housing and supportive services, including support groups, HIV testing and education, domestic violence education, immigration advocacy, and LGBTQ-specific services.

Through my own work, I witness on a regular basis the failure of service organizations and institutions to effectively care for LGBTQ populations. Sojourner House provides invaluable advocacy and direct services to individuals who often face exclusion and oppression by their communities and institutions. This work embraces LGBTQ persons, who are especially underserved by organizations for domestic violence survivors.

The LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program, and the ways in which this organization works to advance inclusion of LGBTQ populations throughout all its advocacy, education, and service efforts, make Sojourner House an exemplary candidate for The Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions Award.

Sincerely,

Colleen Daley Ndoye

Executive Director
Project Weber/RENEW
PO Box 40112
Providence, RI 02940

Phone: 401-383-4888
Email: cdn@weberrenew.org
Follow-Up Application: Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions and Roth Awards

Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Attachment B

IRS 501(c)(3) Documentation
SOJOURNER HOUSE INC
WEBOSSET HILL STATION
386 SMITH ST
PROVIDENCE RI 02908-3727868

Employer Identification Number: 05-0370419
Person to Contact: Mr. McQueen
Toll Free Telephone Number: 1-877-829-5500

Dear Taxpayer:

This is in response to your request of Mar. 19, 2008, regarding your tax-exempt status.

Our records indicate that a determination letter was issued in January 1977, that recognized you as exempt from Federal income tax, and discloses that you are currently exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Our records also indicate you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Michele M. Sullivan, Oper. Mgr.
Accounts Management Operations I
Follow-Up Application: Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions and Roth Awards

Sojourner House’s *LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program*

Attachment C

*LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program FY17 Program Budget*
Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

FY17 Program Budget: July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

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Follow-Up Application: Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions and Roth Awards

Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Attachment D

Sojourner House First Conversation Form
First Contact Form

Caller’s Full Name: ___________________________ DOB: _________ Age: _________

Safe phone number: __________________________

Date: __________ Staff Name: __________________________ Duration of Call: __________

The purpose of this screening is to help us decide what services would be the most appropriate for you, in collaboration with services Sojourner House provides and services other community partners provide. The screening will take at least 10 minutes. Please feel free to answer the questions you are comfortable with.

What is your reason for seeking shelter? ____________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

[If needed, ask more specific questions to get as much info as possible:]

○ What is the relationship between you and your abuser? ___________________________

○ Do you recall when and how the abuse first began? If so, can you describe it?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Can you tell me the last incident you had with your partner?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ What happens when you and your partner argue?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Do you feel afraid of your partner? When do you feel the most afraid?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Do you have a restraining order, order of protection or a No Contact Order against your abuser?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Have you ever called the police on your partner? Have they been arrested?

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Does your partner own a weapon? Have they ever threatened you with it? __________

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Does your partner threaten to harm you? ______________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

○ Where are you currently staying? __________________________ Is this where you’re calling from? YES NO

______________________________________________________________________________
Where do you live and who do you live with? (i.e. house, apartment, hotel, car, etc.)

If your housing is unstable or you are homeless, when was the last time your abuser contacted you? Is your abuser incarcerated? If so, when do you expect him to be released?

If you live with your abuser, is your home or apartment leased in your name?

How did you hear about Sojourner House?

- Have you ever received services from us before, or stayed in our emergency safe house?

Are you currently working with any other organizations or professionals to receive services?

Do you have any children? **YES NO**

What are their ages and genders?

Would they be coming to the safe house with you? **YES NO**

- The safe house is in Woonsocket. Does this pose a problem (with regards to transportation, school, work, etc) for you?

- Sojourner House operates under a harm reduction model—meaning although drugs and alcohol are prohibited from the property of the Safe House, we do not require people to be sober to live here. Often one or more of our residents are in recovery from substance or alcohol use. Do you have any questions or concerns about this?
  - Would you be triggered by this model?
Sojourner House

Committed to ending domestic violence

Sojourner House recognizes that gender exists on a spectrum and that there are an infinite amount of genders and gender expressions. With this in mind, our safe house promotes an inclusive environment that welcomes and values individuals regardless of gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

- Would you be triggered by this philosophy?

The safe house has shared bedrooms and common areas. Would you be comfortable in this environment?

The following is information you should know about the safe house before you come here.

- The location of the safe house is confidential and may not be disclosed to anyone.
- All residents are required to disable GPS on smart phones and social media while on safe house property.
- The address of the safe house was mistakenly published in the phonebook two years ago.
- You can only bring 2 large garbage bags worth of items per person (or the equivalent).
- You will be assigned an advocate who you will meet with regularly.
- You will be responsible for completing a weekly chore and contributing to the upkeep of the house.
- The alarm is set from 10pm-6am. Residents are expected to be in during those hours unless they have made other arrangements with their advocate beforehand.
- Contact with your abuser is strongly discouraged.
- Physically disciplining children is strongly discouraged.
- Sojourner House takes teenagers (male and female) up to age 18.
- Upon entrance to the safe house, all fabric items must be placed into the hot box for 6-8 hours, as per our bed bug policy.

Do you have any final questions for me?

I am now going to discuss this with the rest of the residential team. I will reach back out to you once we've made a decision. Take care!

Notes:
Follow-Up Application: Mary Byron Project’s Celebrating Solutions and Roth Awards

Sojourner House’s LGBTQ Advocacy and Education Program

Attachment E

Sojourner House Safety Plan
Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my abuser's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to them and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

**Step One: Safety during a violent incident. In order to increase safety, I can use some or all of the following strategies:**

A. If I decide to leave, I will _________________. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would you use?)

B. I can keep a bag and car keys ready and put them (place) ____________ in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell ________________________ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

I can also tell ________________________ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.

E. I will use _______ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.

F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _________________. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)

If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to ________________ or ________________.

G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.

H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is at lowest risk, such as ______________________________. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)

I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my abuser what they want to calm them down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

**Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.** I may have to leave the residence I share with an abusive person. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. My abuser may strike back if they believe that I am leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:
A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with ________________ so I can leave quickly.

B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at ____________________________.

C. I will open a savings account by _____________________ (date), to increase my independence.

D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: ____________________________.

E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is ____________________________.
I can seek shelter by calling this hotline.

F. I understand that if my abuser has access to my telephone bill, if I use my cell phone, the following month the telephone bill may tell my abuser those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either buy/use a different phone, change my SIM card, use a third party calling app like Google Voice or Skype, or I might get a friend to let me use their cell phone for a limited time when I first leave.

G. I will check with _____________________ and _____________________ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.

H. I can leave extra clothes with ______________________.

I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____________________ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____________________ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.

J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

k. When preparing to leave, I will not forward my address. I will rent a post office box that my abuser is not aware of. I can register in the Domestic Violence Address Confidentiality Program.
   RI residents can print an application at the following website:
   http://sos.ri.gov/documents/elections/address%20confidentiality.pdf

Step 3: Safety in my own residence. There are many things that I can do to increase my safety in my own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. (Alliance Security provides free alarm systems to survivors of domestic violence in RI. You just need a referral from one of the six agencies.)
D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to ___________ (friend/family/minister/other) in the event that my partner takes the children.
H. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include: _______________ (school),
   _______________ (day care staff),
   _______________ (baby-sitter),
   _______________ (Sunday school teacher),
   _______________ (teacher), and
   _______________ (others).
I. I can inform ____________________ (neighbor), ____________________ (family/community support), and ____________________ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

Step 4: Safety with a protection order. I recognize that I may need get a restraining order, or to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

A. I will keep my protection order _______________ (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change bags, that's the first thing that should go in.)

B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.

C. I can call the Sheriff's department at the courthouse where I got the order to check on whether the order has been served.

D. There is a state registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is in the registry. The telephone number for the state registry of protection orders is (401) 421-5268.

E. I can call the local domestic violence program if I have any questions about my protection order.

F. I will inform three people I can trust, ____________________, ____________________ and ____________________ that I have a protection order in effect.
G. If my abuser destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by contacting the Sheriff's Department.

H. If my abuser violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate and/or advise the court of the violation.

I. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the district justice in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney. I can charge my abuser with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes that they commit in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

**Step 5: Safety on the job and in public.** I must decide if and when I will tell others that my abuser has hurt me and that I may be at continued risk. Friends, family and coworkers can help protect me. I should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure my safety.

I might do any of the following:

A. I can inform my boss, security supervisor and ___________________ at work of my situation.

B. I can ask ___________________ to help screen my telephone calls at work.

C. When leaving work, I can ___________________.

D. When driving home, if problems occur, I can ___________________.

E. If I use public transportation, I can ___________________.

F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when I was with my abuser.

G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when I was with my abuser.

H. I can also ___________________.

**Step 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use.** Some people may use alcohol, mood-altering drugs, or other substances for a variety of reasons; some survivors may use these substances to cope with abusive relationships, or their abuser may have introduced them to or coerced them to use alcohol, mood-altering drugs, and other substances. The use of alcohol, mood-altering drugs, or other substances, may make it difficult to leave a relationship, may put a survivor at a disadvantage in legal actions with their abuser, or reduce a survivor’s awareness and ability to act quickly when violence occurs. An abuser may also become increasingly more violent when using alcohol, mood-altering drugs, or other substances. When a survivor, an abuser, or both parties
may be using alcohol, mood-altering drugs, or other substances, a survivor may need to make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my abuser, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.

B. I can also ____________________________.

C. If my partner is using, I can ____________________________.

D. I might also ____________________________.

E. To safeguard my children, I might ____________________________ and ____________________________.

Step 7: Safety and my emotional health. The experience of being in an abusive relationship is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can ____________________________.

B. When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone, I can ____________________________.

C. I can try to use "I can . . ." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.

D. I can tell myself: "__________________________" whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

E. I can read ____________________________ to help me feel stronger.

F. I can call ____________________________ and ____________________________ as other resources to be of support to me.

G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are ____________________________ and ____________________________.

H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program, ____________________________.
support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

Step 8: Items to take when leaving. If I leave, it is important to take certain items. Beyond this, I can give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case I have to leave quickly.

Items on the first list are the most important for me to take. If there is time, I might take the other items, or store them outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS
- Identification for myself
- Children's birth certificates
- My birth certificate Social Security cards
- School and vaccination records
- Money
- Checkbook, ATM card
- Credit cards
- Keys–house, car, office
- Driver's license and registration
- Medications

OTHER ITEMS
- Welfare Identification
- Work permits
- Green card
- Passport(s)
- Divorce papers
- Medical records—for all family members
- Lease/Rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- Bank books
- Insurance papers
- Small objects that can be sold
- Address book
- Pictures
- Jewelry
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value
Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:

Police Department–home ______________________

Police Department–school ______________________

Police Department–work ______________________

Battered Women's Program ______________________

Restraining Order Office ______________________

State registry of protection orders ______________________

Work number ______________________

Supervisor's home number ______________________

Minister ______________________

Friend ______________________

Other ______________________

Other ______________________
TAKEN FROM: