

Dear Editor,

A news source recently reported views expressed by the McKinley County Commission and staff regarding Battered Families Services, Inc. It would be preferable, of course, for any misunderstandings or conflicting issues to be resolved in private before public statements are made, but BFS has now been publicly criticized, and so I would like to set the record straight regarding the status and financial health of BFS.

First of all, BFS was accused of fiscal irresponsibility and inadequate sharing of information. In the past three years, BFS has not only cleaned up all past inherited financial issues but currently has a totally clean audit, as our external auditors will readily confirm. Additionally, we have recently been recognized nationally for our transparency as a nonprofit organization. We have provided the county with whatever information they requested. The public accusations are, therefore, mistaken.

Secondly, BFS was criticized for seeking outside funding without the County's "permission," and this seems to be the basis for the County's unwillingness to actually implement and manage the BFS appropriations for which they are the designated fiscal agent. We would hope that any issues in this regard would be resolved professionally, with good communication, and in the spirit of cooperation.

There are two key issues at hand: Number one, there are many families in McKinley County suffering from domestic violence. BFS is the primary service provider for parents and children who are at risk from abuse or neglect by other adults in their households. Alcohol abuse is a major contributor to these tragic circumstances, but there are other factors in play, as well.

We believe it is unconscionable for our local governments to deny resources in support of these families. The need is so great that our only recourse has been to seek as much outside funding as possible to meet the urgent needs of these suffering county citizens.

Number two, our current facilities have serious deficiencies for which funding has been appropriated. However, the county has failed to cooperate with BFS in putting those resources

Battered Families Services responds to county, news source

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to use. In the meantime, we have proposed a plan for a new facility and comprehensive program based on international best practices, and we are pursuing funding to make that a reality.

It would be in the best interests of BFS, the County and the County community for there to be the highest degree of cooperation and support possible from all of our public agencies.

***Sincerely,
Emily Ellison
Executive Director of Battered Family Services***