

EXHIBIT NO. 1

12
5-22-01

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 7, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FUNDING FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES (DCJS) FOR THE TRUANCY OUTREACH PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ISSUE: City Council acceptance of grant funding, in the amount of \$64,499, from the Department of Criminal Justice Services to fund a full-time Truancy Outreach Specialist.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council :

- (1) Approve the acceptance of \$64,499 of grant funding from the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). There is a \$32,250 in-kind match provided by the Alexandria City Public School System;
- (2) Approve the continuation of grant funding for a full-time Alexandria Public Schools (ACPS) Truancy Outreach Specialist. This grant position has been administered through ACPS since July, 1999 and DCJS recently provided notification that the grant must be submitted through the City. This grant funded position will terminate upon the expiration of the grant funding and the individual who is in the position has been notified of this condition of employment and has signed an agreement of understanding with regard to this condition; and
- (3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents.

BACKGROUND: On June 11, 1999, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) was awarded a Juvenile Delinquency Prevention grant for \$64,499 from the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The grant funds were used to fund a Truancy Outreach Specialist position to respond to new truancy statutes passed by the General Assembly and to increase overall truancy efforts by the school system. Recent truancy laws require that after six unexcused absences, the school system is required to bring the child and family before the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. The Truancy Outreach Specialist was created to work closely with the Court Service Unit to provide early intervention to families so children are returned to school and court involvement is

not necessary. The Truancy Outreach Specialist is also charged with raising community awareness of truancy issues with businesses and civic associations to ensure that children who are not enrolled in the school system would be identified and enrolled.

On July 1, 2001, the grant will begin its third year of operation. When the school system informed DCJS of its intent to file application for continuation funding, DCJS discovered that the federal regulations of the grant require that only a local government entity can be applicant for this particular grant and the school system is not eligible to apply (Attachment A).

ACPS has seen a marked improvement in student attendance since the onset of the grant and strongly supports the on-going truancy efforts of the grant. In order to continue the grant program, the City will need to become the grant applicant and the school system will continue to administer the program operations.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of the DCJS grant is to combat truancy by developing a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address truancy.

A requirement of the grant is that a local plan be created to reduce truancy in the City. The local plan, devised during FY 2000 when the grant was first awarded, included an Truancy Outreach Specialist to work closely with other agencies, build a campaign of truancy awareness in the community and work with the court system to ensure the compliance with strict attendance laws in more difficult truancy matters.

The Truancy Outreach Specialist works closely with the Attendance Review Panel which began in March of 1997. The Attendance Review Panel was initiated as a partnership with ACPS and the Court Service Unit to deal with truancy by formally informing parents and children of criminal and civil sanctions available in the legal system that can be imposed in cases where there is consistent truancy and to encourage the parents to improve the child's attendance at school. Besides representatives from ACPS and the Court Service Unit, the Attendance Review Panel includes a representative from the Police Department, the Office of Commonwealth's Attorney and the Department of Social Services. School Social Workers from all schools in the City make truancy referrals to the Attendance Review Panel through the Court Service Unit.

Since March of 1997, there have been 35 Attendance Review Panel meetings and 291 truancy cases addressed. During the 1999-2000 school year, there were 185 referrals to the Attendance Review Panel. Of the 185 referrals, 35 were referred to court as a Child also In Need of Supervision (CHINS) because these youth had other serious problems such as drug use or severe behavior problems. The Truancy Outreach Specialist provided court reports and testimony in these cases. Another 19 youth were elementary school children whose parents were not cooperating by sending their children to school on a regular basis. Warrants were issued in these cases against the parents. The remaining 131 youth are being monitored by school social workers. The Truancy Outreach Specialist assists in monitoring cases and school attendance in these cases when the youth is brought before the court for continuing truant behavior.

Data collected by the school system shows that from this group of 185 youth in FY 2000, 35% have shown significant improvement in their grade point average (GPA) and 8.5% of the group have average to above-average GPAs. The STEP Program at TC Williams High School, which works with the more difficult truant cases, has found a 70% increase in attendance among their students as a result of the Attendance Review Panel and Truancy Outreach Specialist.

The Truancy Outreach Specialist presence has helped increase the referrals to the Attendance Review Panel during the current 2000-2001 school year. Thus far, there have been 106 referrals to the Attendance Review Panel and extra meetings have been scheduled to deal with the increased volume of referrals. The number of overall referrals during this school year is expected to increase over last year and caseloads for School Social Workers and Court Service Unit Probation Officers is expected to increase by about 20%. It is important to note that an increased percentage of cases are complying with the attendance regulations after first contact by the Truancy Outreach Specialist and court action is not necessary. These children would not have received this level of services and attention without the truancy program of this grant in conjunction with the Attendance Review Panel.

The Truancy Outreach Specialist has also provided services to siblings of identified truant youth. Several referrals of truant children to the program have been made from individuals outside the school system as a direct result of truancy awareness campaign posters and speeches to civic associations and the business community. Most of these are youth who are unknown to the school because they have never been enrolled. The Truancy Outreach Specialist follows up on these cases and ensures that these youth are properly enrolled in the school system.

FISCAL IMPACT: The City would be awarded a total of \$64,499 under the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). There is a \$32,250 local in-kind match requirement for this grant. The in-kind match is provided by the Alexandria City Public Schools SASI Information System which is used for tracking and monitoring student attendance.

It should be noted that there are no monies available in the Alexandria City Public School or City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended. The grant funded position will terminate upon the expiration of the grant, and the individual who is filling the position has been notified of this condition of employment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Letter dated April 2, 2001 from Janice D. Waddy, Grants Administrator, Department of Criminal Justice Services to Dr. Herbert Berg, Superintendent, Alexandria City Public Schools

STAFF:

Lillian Brooks, Director of Court Services
Dr. Bruce Venter, Assistant Superintendent for Financial and Administrative Services
Dr. Lawrence Jointer, Director of Pupil Services of Alexandria City Public Schools
Carol Anne Moore, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget

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ATTACHMENT

Pupil Services

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

Joseph B. Benedetti
Director

805 East Broad Street, Tenth Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-4000
FAX (804) 371-8981
TDD (804) 386-8732

April 2, 2001

Dr. Herbert Berg
Superintendent
Alexandria City Public Schools
2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311

Dear Mr. Berg,

RE: Grant Proposal 02-C3263TV01 – JJDP 2001 Title V

The Alexandria City Public Schools has applied for the third year for a grant to fund a Title V Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Program. It has recently come to our attention that our agency was in error in previously awarding the grant funds for this program directly to the school system. Guidelines require DCJS to make funds available to local units of government and not divisions within the local government.

We do not want to cause any programmatic changes to Alexandria's Truancies Reduction Programs. However, we are requesting your assistance in resolving this error in the grant application pending. With the grant proposal for the period July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002, we are requesting that you transfer the grant application request to the appropriate recipient, the City of Alexandria. Alexandria should serve as fiscal agent for the grant and would be the direct recipient of the grant funds. Please submit a revised grant application form to DCJS signed by the City Manager of Alexandria.

If you have any further questions or if the City of Alexandria officials have any questions, please feel free to contact Laurel Marks, Juvenile Program Analyst at (804) 786-3462 or by e-mail at lmarks@dcjs.state.va.us. or me at (804) 786-4011 or by e-mail at jwaddy@dcjs.state.va.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice D. Waddy".

Janice D. Waddy
Grants Administrator

Cc: Dr. Laurence Jointer
Ms. Lillian Brooks
Ms. Laurel Marks, DCJS