

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 4, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR GRANT SUBMISSION TO THE FEDERAL OFFICE OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES (OVC) TO FUND ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD'S ONGOING RESPONSE TO THE THREAT OF TERRORISM, THE SNIPER ATTACKS, AND OTHER RELATED EVENTS

ISSUE: Consideration of the Alexandria Community Services Board's (CSB) application through the State Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services for grant funds available from the federal Office of Victims of Violent Crimes (OVC). Funds are being dispersed through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the grant submission and, if awarded, accept \$970,127 for FY 2004 and \$1,020,297 for FY 2005 (a total of \$1,990,424 over two years) in OVC funds. No City match is required for this grant; all administrative costs associated with activities undertaken pursuant to the grant are covered by grant funds. These funds would provide two tiers of services as follows:

Tier I: They would provide mental health services to survivors of the attacks on September 11, 2001, and their families. This funding would also provide mental health services to first responders and their families. Three full time licensed mental health therapists (a Team Leader and 2 Therapist III's), with benefits, would provide crisis counseling, crisis intervention, mental health counseling and related care, and facilitate peer support to meet the needs of this population. A part-time Administrative Officer (0.5 FTE) would provide support to the team. Funding for this program, including rent, would total \$296,125 in FY 2004 and \$303,386 in FY 2005.

Tier II: Would provide outreach, individual and group crisis counseling, community education, and referrals to Alexandrians who have been affected by the continued, unanticipated traumatic events since September 11 including the sniper attacks, the war in Iraq, and intermittent terror alerts. These services have been provided by the Community Resilience Project, funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

through the end of this fiscal year, for the last 20 months. If approved, OVC would continue funding the project for two years to include 12 FTEs with benefits. The positions would include a Mental Health Team Leader, an Administrative Officer, 6.5 Therapist I's, 1.5 Therapists II's, 1 Therapist III, and 1 MH Tech II. Funding for this program would total \$674,002 in FY 2004 and \$716,911 in FY 2005.

BACKGROUND: After the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon, the Northern Virginia region was declared a disaster area. Alexandria CSB, with approval from City Council, applied for and received a series of grants from FEMA to provide crisis counseling services to the community, as well as a grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand emergency mental health and prevention services. The FEMA and SAMHSA grants expire at the end of this fiscal year.

New funding for mental health services for direct victims, first responders, and their families is available from OVC through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services as a result of the Department of Defense and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-117). Congress recently adopted language under the Counter-Terrorism Supplement (Public Law 108-480) that expands the use of these funds. Seven Northern Virginia Community Services Boards were invited to apply for non-competitive funding for services to direct victims and first responders of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Tier I above, \$296,125 in FY 2004 and \$303,386 in FY 2005 for a total of \$599,511 over two years). If approved by Council, funding would begin July 1, 2003, and expire September 15, 2005.

With FEMA funding, the Community Resilience Project has provided outreach, individual and group crisis counseling, education, and referrals to the Alexandria community at large since October 2001. The sniper attacks, terror alerts, and the war in Iraq have resulted in increased requests for services. OVC will consider funding to provide services to the community at large (Tier II above, \$674,002 in FY 2004 and \$716,911 in FY 2005 for a total of \$1,390,913 over two years) in response to the collective impact of terrorism.

The Alexandria CSB submitted this grant application to the State Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, in order to meet the deadline of April 18, 2003, with the understanding that subsequent City Council authorization would be required to accept this grant award. The grant application is available for review in the CSB administrative offices at 720 N. St. Asaph Street (703) 838-4455.

DISCUSSION OF TIER I SERVICES: A need for mental health services to 9/11 survivors, including first responders and their families, clearly exists. Approximately 24,000 military and civilians were at work at the Pentagon on September 11th. Many of these persons live in Alexandria. Many military employees avoid using their internal mental health system because they fear their fitness for duty record will be negatively affected. Craig Sincock, retired career Army and head of the "Pentagon Angels," a support group for survivors and family members, reports that there are hundreds of local survivors and family members who are just beginning to

recognize their need for help. An estimated additional 150 survivors and family members from around the country are expected to come to Alexandria for the Moussaoui trial. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice is expecting MHMRSA to provide mental health support for these persons.

An assessment of the mental health needs of the City's 950 emergency service personnel after September 11 revealed that three full-time mental health professionals were needed 24/7 to provide ongoing support, crisis counseling, and therapy. The majority of the City's Fire and EMS workers worked 19 consecutive days of 12-hour shifts on the rescue and recovery effort at the Pentagon. These first responders experienced the horror of September 11 firsthand and are reminded of it when they respond to emergency incidents. According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as many as one in three rescue workers experience severe stress symptoms which may lead to lasting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, or depression. Research from the Oklahoma City and Columbine shows that most first responders do not seek mental health support until 2 to 4 years following a traumatic event.

Chief Samarra and Interim Fire Chief Gower fully support this grant.

With grant funds MHMRSA would hire three additional full-time licensed mental health professionals (including one team leader) to provide the following services to approximately 1,290 persons over two years, including victims who suffered direct harm as a result of the terrorist attacks, victim family members, first responders and family members of first responders:

- Individual and Group Crisis Counseling designed to reduce the psychological and behavioral consequences of a major disaster;
- Crisis Intervention to examine the impact of the terrorism incident on victims, identify needs resulting from the crime, develop a plan to respond to those needs, and assist victims in implementing the plan;
- Mental Health Counseling and Care to assess, diagnose, and treat victims' mental and emotional functioning; and
- Peer Support to provide opportunities for victims to meet others with similar experiences and engage in self-help and peer support.

Mental health therapists are most effective when they participate in ride-a-longs, provide psycho-educational workshops, train the Crisis Incident Stress Management (CISM) peer counselors, facilitate peer support groups, and offer treatment off-site (i.e., not at 720 N. St. Asaph St.). Therefore, rent was included in the Tier I grant request.

DISCUSSION OF TIER II SERVICES: The following table illustrates the continued, unanticipated traumatic events that have occurred since September 11th and have impeded individual and community recovery.

Event	2001				2002				2003			
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Mar	Sep	Oct	Dec	Feb	Mar	Apr
9/11 Attack on Pentagon	█											
Anthrax mail attacks	█	█										
War on Terrorism (Afghanistan)		█	█	█	█	█						
War on Terrorism (Iraq)								█			█	█
War on Terrorism (North Korea)								█				
Terror Alert System						█						
Terror Alert raised							█			█	█	
Terror Alert lowered							█			█		█
Anniversary of 9/11							█					
Sniper Attacks								█				
Small pox inoculations									█			
SARS										█	█	█

Many people were already on edge, suffering from a wide variety of emotional, physical, and behavioral reactions as a result of September 11th. Every subsequent event, including the fears of bioterrorism, the war in Iraq, and the emphasis on emergency preparedness, has triggered an increased demand for mental health services that has not let up since the sniper attacks.

Since its inception in October 2001, the Alexandria Community Resilience Project has:

- Provided 44,517 individual crisis counseling, information and referral contacts
- Facilitated 2,233 educational groups with 39,284 participants
- Led 186 counseling groups with 3,430 participants
- Provided 1,956 referrals to area agencies
- Distributed 235,569 pieces of psycho-educational and marketing material

Helping individuals and the public to move beyond potentially debilitating reactions, the Community Resilience Team consists of natives from Columbia, Peru, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Ethiopia who speak nine languages including Spanish, Arabic, Pashto, and Amharic. They are successful in reaching the under-served immigrant and refugee communities that have been severely affected by the economic fallout of 9/11. These staff provide outreach services at the Casey Clinic, the Alexandria Health Clinic, and DHS, as well as the detention center, court services, places of worship, businesses, senior high rises, libraries, the schools, recreation centers, and a variety of social service agencies. Workshops for children, teens and adults on anger and stress management and psychological preparedness are especially in high demand. Outcome indicators show that participants in these programs gain important skills to help them better manage life's difficulties.

The Community Resilience Project has a combination of 12 paraprofessional, professional, and support FTEs that would provide the following services to persons who live or work in Alexandria:

- Outreach and individual and group crisis counseling;
- Education services to provide resource information on dealing with stress and related topics; and
- Referrals to ensure that those who require long-term mental health care beyond the scope of the Community Resilience Project are linked to a licensed mental health professional.

Receipt of federal funds for Tier I and Tier II services would add a total of 15.5 FTEs for a period of two years. Absent a grant extension, when the grant ends these FTEs would be eliminated in September 2005.

FISCAL IMPACT: Receipt of a total of \$970,127 in FY 2004 and \$1,020,297 in FY 2005, for a total of \$1,990,424 over two years. **No City match or funding is required.**

STAFF:

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