

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 12, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR GRANT SUBMISSION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES TO PROVIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING IN PRESCHOOLS AND HOMELESS SHELTERS FOR CHILDREN AGES THREE AND OLDER

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of the Alexandria Community Services Board (CSB) application for grant funds from the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) Strengthening the Family Prevention Initiative (SFI) to enhance existing prevention programming in Alexandria preschools and homeless shelters through the CSB Preschool Prevention Team.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve the grant application to DMHMRSAS for funding in the amount of \$100,000, (a) to provide mental health services to an additional 100 preschool children by consulting with teachers and parents regarding child behavior problems, providing parenting workshops and facilitating groups at the City's homeless shelters; and (b) to train teachers at 15 preschools to implement *Al's Pals*, increasing services through the *Al's Pals* program by 220 children.
- (2) Authorize the addition of a Therapist III (1.0 FTE) and a part-time Therapist II (0.30 FTE) to the Preschool Prevention Team in the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse.

**BACKGROUND:** The Alexandria Early Childhood Commission estimated that there were 3,722 at-risk preschool children in the City as of June 2002. In addition, through needs assessments conducted over the last year and a half, preschool directors in the City have identified the need for increased mental health services to children and their families. SFI seeks to support prevention activities for families and their children, ages three and older. All proposals for the grant must utilize a federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) model

program. The Preschool Prevention Team in the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse has recently implemented *Al's Pals*, a CSAP model program, in nine preschools, reaching more than 200 children weekly. *Al's Pals* is a nationally recognized, resiliency-based early childhood prevention program, designed to reduce future substance abuse by developing personal, social and emotional skills in children. Preschool prevention staff collaborate with preschool directors, teachers, family support workers, Child Find, Parent Infant Education (PIE) and DHS staff.

**DISCUSSION:** This grant proposes adding a Therapist III (1.0 FTE) and a part-time Therapist II (0.30 FTE), both preferably bilingual. The staff will help expand the capacity of *Al's Pals* by training preschool teachers to implement *Al's Pals* and by providing consultation to teachers implementing *Al's Pals*; provide parent workshops and consultation; train and work with the City's homeless shelters by facilitating groups; and provide behavioral consultation to parents. Funds up to \$100,000 will be awarded for FY 2005 with the possibility of four one-year renewals.

It should be noted that the CSB, in an effort to maximize resources, also is applying for funds from the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation (VTSF) to enhance existing tobacco prevention programming in Alexandria preschools through the CSB Preschool Prevention Team. In the event that both grants are awarded, the Board will be able to serve more of the City's over 3,700 at-risk preschool children in more locations in the City.

The services that would be provided through this grant are consistent with Council's recent work in setting major goals for the City, one of which is caring for at-risk youth and families. In addition, the Youth Policy, which City Council adopted in February 2000, emphasizes prevention and activities that are supportive of families.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The grant proposal is for \$100,000, which is the maximum allowed through this grant application process. No City match is required. It should be noted that there are no monies in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended. At the end of the grant period, the two positions will be eliminated.

**ATTACHMENT:** None. The grant application may be reviewed in Room 3600 (Office of Management and Budget), City Hall, after March 31, 2004.

**STAFF:**

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