

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 4, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF GRANT APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES FOR THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE AND AWARENESS (SARA) PROGRAM

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a two year grant application (FY 2006 and FY 2007) to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, in the amount of \$265,794 for the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application to the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) for funding in the amount of \$265,794 that would result in the continued funding of the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program; and
- (2) Approve the continuation of one full-time Social Worker, one part-time Volunteer Developer and one part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialist for the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program.

It should be noted that the grant renewal application is due on April 1, 2005, and would fund monies in FY 2006 and FY 2007. Due to constrained time line for grant submission, staff submitted the grant application contingent upon City Council approval at its April 12, 2005 meeting.

BACKGROUND: These grant funds are made available through the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and state funding designated for rape crisis centers to provide direct services for victims of sexual violence. The Request for Proposals is for a two year funding period. In 1999, the administration of these grants was reorganized at the state level between the Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Criminal Justice Services. The Virginia Department of Health transferred the administration of some of the funding for sexual assault programs to the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Today, DCJS is responsible for

administering and monitoring grants with the intent of improving direct services to victims of sexual violence. DCJS moved to a two year grant cycle in FY 2002 in order to reduce the amount of administrative work on the state and local level.

This grant application requests funding for one full-time Social Worker I, one part-time Volunteer Developer and one part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialist to provide direct services to victims of sexual assault.

The Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program is currently the only program providing comprehensive services to victims of sexual violence in the City of Alexandria. The initial grant was awarded in 1999 to fund one full-time Program Coordinator and one 0.25 Social Worker I. In 2000, modifications were made to the grant application that allowed the Program Coordinator to receive full-time funding from the City of Alexandria and enabled to SARA Program to use DCJS grant resources to fund a full-time Social Worker, a part-time Volunteer Developer and a part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialist.

DISCUSSION: Sexual assault remains a pervasive and severely under reported crime in the United States. According to the National Women's Study (1992), it is estimated that 683,000 American women are raped each year. It is also estimated that 12.1 million women have been the victims of rape in their lifetime. Sexual assault often has a devastating impact on the quality of victim's lives. Research indicates that sexual assault survivors can experience considerable psychological trauma that often results in depression, suicide attempts, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Levy, 1991). The fear and anxiety, loss of self esteem, and physical injury caused by sexual assault can affect every aspect of the victim's life, creating impediments to forming and/or sustaining healthy relationships and interfering with the ability to sustain a healthy and meaningful life. Sexual assault impacts not only the primary victim, but also diminishes the quality of life of parents, coworkers, friends, partners, and children. Given the significant potential impact on victims, it is essential that comprehensive services are available to assist survivors with healing from sexual trauma.

The Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program provided comprehensive services to 726 victims of sexual assault during FY 2004. If funded, this grant would enable the SARA Program to continue to provide direct services to victims of sexual assault including a 24-hour hotline, medical and police accompaniment, court advocacy, information and referral, and individual and group counseling. In addition, this grant would provide funding for staff to provide training to allied professionals such as police officers, teachers, mental health counselors, and health care providers on the dynamics of sexual violence and available services.

FISCAL IMPACT: The budget for this two-year grant is \$265,794, with no matching funds required. The City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency, the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department. It should be noted that there may be no monies available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are

expended. The grant-funded positions would terminate upon the expiration of the grant and the individuals who fill the positions have been or will be notified of this condition of employment.

GRANT PERIOD: July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2007.

STAFF:

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