

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 3, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF GRANT APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES FOR THE HISPANIC OUTREACH SERVICES PROJECT IN THE OFFICE ON WOMEN

ISSUE: Submission of a grant application to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, STOP Violence Against Women Grant Program in the amount of \$43,232 for the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program's Hispanic Outreach Services Project.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submitted grant application to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) for funding in the amount of \$43,232 for continued funding of the Office on Women's Hispanic Outreach Services Project;
- (2) Approve the continuation of one full-time Hispanic Outreach Specialist position. This grant-funded position would terminate upon the expiration of the grant and the individual who fills this position would be notified of this condition of employment at the time that he or she is hired, and would sign an agreement of understanding with regard to this condition. It should be noted that there are no funds available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expired; and
- (3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all documents that may be required.

It should be noted that the grant renewal application is due on September 17, 2004, and would fund monies in CY 2005. Due to constrained time line for grant submission, staff submitted the grant application contingent upon City Council approval at its September 14, 2004, meeting.

BACKGROUND: In 1994, the United States Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. One part of the VAWA is the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecution) Violence Against Women Program.

The goal of the STOP program is to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies and victim services, thereby providing more widespread apprehension, prosecution, and adjudication of persons committing violent crimes against women. These STOP grants funds are administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, which established the improvement of victim service delivery to racial, cultural, ethnic, and language minorities as one of its priorities.

Regardless of culture, national statistics show that only one in ten victims of sexual assault in the United States report their crime to law enforcement. Typical barriers to reporting a sexual assault are even more pronounced for Hispanic/Latino women, who frequently do not speak English, fear law enforcement agents and often face social and cultural norms that reinforce male dominance and discourage discussion of sexual issues. These factors contribute to an environment in which Hispanic/Latino victims often fail to get the help they may need.

The Office on Women's Hispanic Outreach Services Project is currently the only program offering comprehensive services to Spanish-speaking victims of sexual assault in Alexandria. The initial grant was awarded for Calendar Year (CY) 1997 and renewed for CY 1998 and 1999 to hire a part-time Hispanic Outreach Specialist in order to provide comprehensive services for victims of sexual assault and educational outreach to the City's growing Spanish-speaking population. Due to the success of this project, the grant award was increased in 2000, which enabled the SARA Program to hire a full-time Hispanic Outreach Specialist to meet the growing demand for services.

The V-STOP grant continued to fund the full-time Hispanic Outreach Specialist in 2001. In 2002, V-STOP funding was automatically decreased by 20 percent for all current grantees. Funding was restored to CY 2001 levels for the CY 2003 grant, making up for the 20 percent decrease in 2002. In CY 2004, V-STOP once again funded the Hispanic Outreach Specialist with an award similar to that of CY 2003. If awarded, this funding application for CY 2005 will allow the SARA Program to fund a full-time Hispanic Outreach Specialist who will provide sexual assault victims with direct services and expand outreach efforts to Spanish-speaking residents.

DISCUSSION: The Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program provided comprehensive services for 716 victims of sexual assault during FY 2004. During this time, the Hispanic Outreach Specialist provided comprehensive services to 108 victims of sexual assault and their families, of which 97 spoke Spanish. Some of these services included: crisis intervention, court advocacy and information and referral. The Hispanic Outreach Specialist worked closely with medical, legal and police personnel to facilitate timely referrals and provision of services in sexual assault cases. To assist with the prosecution of sexual assault cases, the Hispanic Outreach Specialist provided court advocacy services to Spanish-speaking clients, supporting victims as their cases proceeded through the often intimidating and confusing legal system.

In addition, the Hispanic Outreach Specialist provided assistance to victims filing crime victim's compensation forms and in translating their victim impact statements for submission to the Circuit Court.

The Hispanic Outreach Specialist also provided extensive outreach by distributing brochures and posters throughout the Hispanic community. During the first six months of the current grant period, the Hispanic Outreach Specialist has already provided presentations to 133 Spanish-speaking residents within the City on issues such as sexual harassment, child sexual abuse prevention, and sexual assault awareness. Moreover, this grant has allowed the SARA Program to develop a committee of bilingual allied professionals called Alexandria Hispanics in Action (AHA), which has representatives from agencies such as the Domestic Violence Program, the Victim Witness Assistance Program and the Alexandria Police Department. The AHA committee meets bimonthly to coordinate victim services and initiate outreach efforts in the Hispanic community in an effort to combat sexual and domestic violence. The SARA Program plans to continue these important outreach initiatives if funding is awarded for 2005.

The grant application requests funds for CY 2005 to provide funding for a full-time Outreach Prevention Specialist in the amount of \$43,232 (salary plus benefits).

FISCAL IMPACT: In order to apply for this grant, the City must identify matching funds in the amount of \$14,411 in either in-kind services or a cash match. In the event of a grant award, the City's matching contribution will be provided by the in-kind donations of 849 volunteer hours for a total budget of \$57,643 (including the in-kind match).

The Office on Women will be absorbing the employee benefit costs that exceed the maximum funds available through V-STOP for this grant project.

In addition, 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, which includes the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department. It should be noted that there are no monies available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended. The grant-funded position would terminate upon the expiration of the grant, and the individual who fills the position would be notified of this condition of employment.

STAFF:

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