

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GRANT-FUNDED SOCIAL WORKER II POSITION

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of one full-time Social Worker II grant-funded position from the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) to provide additional child welfare services.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council:

- (1) Approve a grant award from VDSS in the amount of \$111,090 for Fiscal Year 2006; and
- (2) Authorize the establishment of a new full-time, grant-funded Social Worker II position in the Department of Human Services.

**DISCUSSION:** In 2004, Virginia's Child Welfare Services were reviewed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as part of the national Federal Child and Family Services Review. The purpose of this review was to identify strengths and needs within state programs around the country and to provide technical assistance to states to meet newly established best practice outcomes for child welfare. Each State submitted a Program Improvement Plan to HHS with the emphasis on meeting all established benchmarks and outcomes. The Virginia General Assembly included additional funding for FY2006 to support the successful implementation of the State Program Improvement Plan. All local jurisdictions were required to submit a local plan to the state to assure local efforts in practice improvements. Funds were then allocated to local jurisdictions based upon the submitted plan and workload.

Due to previously implemented practices, the Alexandria Department of Human Services met all federal standards at the first review, with the exception of one standard. That standard, to increase the number of children reunified with their families within 12 months, is now being addressed through a number of federally approved strategies. The State has allocated funding to add an additional Social Worker II to address workload issues and implement agency goals and objectives that would promote meeting this federal standard.

Best practices implementation effectively has changed practices in Alexandria's Child Welfare Services to produce desired outcomes for child safety and well-being. The agency seeks to meet federal standards for outcomes and is working to identify practices that will continue to promote accountability. However, with each new practice implemented, there are systemic changes and impacts required to meet these higher standards. Increased face-to face contacts with families and

children, increased community collaboration meetings, additional documentation and structured assessment tools have increased the Social Worker's accountability and workload.

Over the last five years, there has been a consistent and dramatic increase in caseloads across all dimensions of child welfare. Child Protective Services intakes have increased 35% and the number of open abuse and neglect cases has increased as much as 152%. During this past five years in recognition of this increase, there have been a total of 7 new positions approved in Child Welfare area of the Division of Social Services.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The Program Improvement Plan allocation requires a 20% match (\$27,773). The match funds will be absorbed by the Department of Human Services in FY 2006. The total Program Improvement Plan funds for FY 2006 is \$138,863. Of these funds \$75,962 will be used to fund the position and \$62,901 will be available for vendor assistance to help create or revamp current visitation procedures due to increased visitation regulations, and training with the City's Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Department for collaboration between the two departments for children in care. Should the funds be discontinued then the grant-funded position will be terminated.

**STAFF:**

Debra R. Collins, Director, Department of Human Services  
Suzanne Chis, Director, Division of Social Services, DHS  
Vicky Primer, Chief of Services, DHS  
Bruce Johnson, Director, Office of Management and Budget