

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 21, 2007

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 (FY2008 and FY2009) to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, in the amount of \$410,538 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 \$410,538 that would result in the continued funding of positions within the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program and add a position;
- (2) Approve the continuation of funding for one Social Worker, and potential funding for one Volunteer Developer and one Outreach and Prevention Specialist for the Office on Women's SARA Program. These grant-funded positions would terminate upon the expiration of the grant. The individuals who fill these positions were notified of this condition of employment at the time they were hired. They signed 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 expire;
- (3) Approve the request to DCJS to fund one additional full time Social Worker for the SARA Program. If funded, this 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 she/he was hired, signing an agreement of understanding with regard to this condition. There are no funds available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds expire; and
- (4) Authorize the City Manager to execute all documents that may be required prior to the grant application due date of April 13, 2007.

The SARA Program has received DCJS funding since 1999, and this application would request continuation of the existing funding and an additional amount for the adding one SARA staff position.

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 – FY08 and FY09. In Virginia the Department of Criminal Justice Services 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.
- 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 SARA Program has been awarded DCJS funding since 1999 and receives the equivalent of 2 FTE positions which have been supported since 2000. This consists of funding for a Social Worker I, partial funding for the program’s Volunteer Developer and its Outreach & Prevention Specialist (additional funds for these latter two positions come from the City of Alexandria’s General Fund and the Virginia Department of Social Services).
- Continuation of funding to support these positions is requested as well as funding to provide an additional full-time Social Worker I. This year the DCJS application guidelines for FY08 and FY09 states: *“Programs that have a documented history of surpassing statewide and program size caseload averages may be permitted to ask for up to one additional full-time position.”* **The SARA Program is one of the nine (9) programs out of 37 programs eligible to apply for this additional funding. The caseloads of the SARA Program have exceeded both the statewide average and the program size average every year of funding since 1999.** In order to be eligible to apply for this additional funding, a program must have surpassed the statewide average caseload for three years. In FY06 the statewide caseload average was 143 new victims served for each full time staff position. The average for programs comparable in size to the SARA Program in regard to the population and geography of the services area was 133. The SARA Program served 184 new victims per full time staff member. Therefore, DCJS is rewarding the hard work of the SARA Program staff and the continued surpassing of the average caseloads by creating the possibility of adding a new staff member to bear the client load. This additional grant funding is expected to be long-term.

DISCUSSION:

- Sexual assault remains a pervasive and severely under reported crime in the United States. It is estimated that every two and one-half minutes someone is sexually assaulted in the U.S. One in three girls and one in seven boys are sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen. Sexual assault often has a devastating impact on the

quality of a victim's life. 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. 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 648 victims of sexual assault during FY 2006. If the continuation funding is renewed, 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.
- If additional funding were provided through a new Social Worker position, the SARA Program could increase its outreach efforts in the community, especially to underserved populations, and expand its caseload, reaching even more survivors in Alexandria. It is preferred that the new Social Worker be bilingual in English and Spanish so that more survivors who speak Spanish could be served through advocacy and individual therapy. As noted above, the SARA Program staff already serves far more clients than the state average for programs of its size. While the staff makes significant efforts to reach out to various underserved populations (non-English speaking clients, disabled clients, etc.), because of the size of their case loads, they are limited in the amount of outreach and prevention that they can offer. The addition of another Social Worker would enable the program to increase these outreach efforts, which in the past have resulted in additional clients and increased caseloads.

FISCAL IMPACT: The budget for this two-year grant is \$410,538, 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. Any non-personnel costs associated with the possible addition of one grant funded social worker would be absorbed by the Office on Women. 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 positions would terminate upon the expiration of the grant and the individuals who fill the positions would be notified of this condition of employment. Note: DCJS requires that the amount requested in FY2009 not exceed the amount requested in FY2008. On the FY2008 budget, in addition to merit increases a 3% cost of living adjustment has been factored in.

GRANT PERIOD: July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2009.

STAFF:

Lisa Baker, Director, Office on Women

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Bruce Johnson, Director, OMB

Elisabeth Wheel, Budget Analyst, OMB