

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 5, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION FOR VIRGINIA OFFICE OF
COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES GRANT FUNDING FOR AT-RISK YOUTH
AND FAMILIES

ISSUE: City Council authorization to apply for grant funding to the Virginia Office of Comprehensive Services for At Risk Youth and Families.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the grant application in the amount of \$145,821 for a program to help children in residential facilities or children at-risk for residential placements; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: Through the 2006 General Assembly, the Virginia Office of Comprehensive Services for At Risk Youth and Families (OCS) was appropriated funding to implement a grant program. The grant program is to create innovative, community-based services that will allow children and adolescents in the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) program to be served in local communities as opposed to high-cost, residential facilities outside of these localities.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Community Policy and Management Team (ACPMT) is comprised of agency heads from the Alexandria Community Services Board (ACSB), Court Services Unit (CSU), Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Management & Budget (OMB), Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), and the City Health Department. ACPMT provides administrative and fiscal oversight for the use of CSA funds and reviews the service plans for all children in residential treatment.

The team struggles with the mounting costs associated with residential placements. With over 93 percent of placements more than two hours away, the distance of the residential facilities is the most difficult barrier to successfully returning these children to the community. It is difficult for families to locate transportation to facilities, to practice parenting techniques with their children, and to meet

the child's support staff during normal working hours. This is difficult for the children in the facilities.

With this grant funding, the City of Alexandria is proposing to develop and train residents in a group of transition homes to provide regular, monthly respite weekends for the children placed in residential homes and to enable them to return to the community. These families will be able to provide consistent and stable care, to team with the birth parents to model supportive parenting techniques, and to maintain children in the community.

This proposed grant project is based on the evidence-based Wraparound Milwaukee Model. If Alexandria is able to successfully implement this grant program, the number of children in residential facilities far from Alexandria is expected to decrease and the overall CSA expenditures used for residential treatments should also decrease.

This grant is a one-time state grant and cannot be renewed. However, since one purpose of this grant is to decrease CSA expenditures, if the grant program is successful overall CSA costs will decrease, and the future costs of these new project activities will be paid for by expected CSA savings.

FISCAL IMPACT: The total grant budget is \$145,821, which covers the costs of training and compensating the families, the travel to and from the residential facilities, and the cost of the home-based supervised visits with the birth families. No staff will be hired with this grant; however, the current staff will coordinate and implement this program, which will serve as the 15 percent in-kind match. Specifically, the recruiting and training of the foster families will become part of the job of the Foster Family Training & Placement Coordinator. The monthly visits and residential facility coordination will be handled through the current CSB and DHS case managers.

The grant requires staff time from members of the Department of Human Services, Finance Department, and Office of Management and Budget.

The necessary paperwork was submitted in order to meet the November 29, 2006, deadline, with the understanding that subsequent City Council approval would be required to accept any funds.

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Director of Human Services

Suzanne Chis, Director of Family Services, DHS

Dawnel White, CSA Coordinator, DHS

Becky Tavenner, Foster Family Training & Placement Coordinator, DHS

Kendel Taylor, OMB Analyst

Laura Pettus, Grant Coordinator