


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 8, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JIM 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 2010 and FY 2011) to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, in the amount of \$326,016 for the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program. The SARA Program has received DCJS funding since 1999, and this application would request continuation of the existing grant.

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 \$326,016 that would result in the continued funding of positions within the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response & Awareness (SARA) Program;
- (2) Approve the continuation of two Social Workers, 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) Authorize the City Manager to execute all documents that may be required prior to the grant application due date of April 17, 2009; and
- (4) Because of severe City budget constraints, affirm that no additional City funds beyond those proposed for FY 2010 would be available to fund this program in FY 2011 or future years.

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 – FY 2010 and FY 2011. 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 3.0 FTE positions which have been supported since 2000.

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 720 victims of sexual assault during FY 2008. 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.

The City grant application requests funds to continue the two current full-time Social Worker I’s; and partial funding of one full-time Volunteer Developer and one part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialists.

FISCAL IMPACT: This two year grant totals \$326,016 (\$163,008 in both FY 2010 and FY 2011), with no matching funds required. The grant funds the equivalent of 2.3 FTEs and consists of funding for two Social Worker I’s, a Volunteer Developer and an Outreach & Prevention Specialist. The total cost of the four positions for FY 2010 is \$202,735. The grant funding supports 83 percent of the total cost of these positions. The General Fund contributes the remaining \$39,727. The FY 2011 budget for this grant is the same as FY 2010.

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 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 FY 2010 not exceed the amount requested in FY 2009.

GRANT PERIOD: July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2011.

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Assistant City Manager for Community and Human Services

Lisa Baker, Director, Office on Women

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