

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 12, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATION TO THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND (FACT) TO SERVE SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

ISSUE: City Council consideration of grant application in the amount of \$15,000 to the Family and Children's Trust Fund (FACT) to provide training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) and to conduct outreach in the LGBTQ community about sexual and domestic violence services.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit the grant application to FACT in the amount of \$15,000 (Due January 25, 2011); and
- (2) Execute all documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: Alexandria is home to many people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 2.93% of the households in the City of Alexandria are lesbian or gay. Since "household" was used instead of population, the actual percentage of LGBTQ persons in Alexandria is unknown and likely much higher.

Research estimates that 25% to 33% of LGBTQ relationships are abusive, which is the same percentage as in heterosexual relationships. Abusive LGBTQ relationships have many of the same dynamics of power and control as abusive heterosexual relationships, but there are some added barriers to accessing help for LGBTQ victims. These abusive relationships more frequently go undetected and unreported. Further, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning are just as likely as people who identify as heterosexual to experience sexual violence from a family member, acquaintance, partner or stranger. A survivor may be afraid to get help because they may be worried that service providers will be insensitive to their concerns.

To address these concerns, the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program (DVP) and Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program applied for and received funding from the Department of Criminal Justice Services in calendar years 2007 and 2008 to improve services and outreach to survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. A LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board comprised of committed community members and City staff was established so LGBTQ survivors receive informed and respectful treatment and feel more comfortable requesting services. The project continued in 2009 and 2010 through funding from the Family and Children's Trust Fund and a Victim Services Stimulus grant administered through DCJS. The project is funded by the stimulus grant through March 2011. The Advisory Board renamed itself a Task Force and continues to meet quarterly and advise and contribute to the work. An application was made to DCJS, approved by Council in October 2010, but the grant was not funded due to insufficient funding.

The project has been successful. Staff scrutinized policies, practices, and outreach materials within SARA and DVP, revised them to be more inclusive, and conducted outreach in the community. More than 1,300 service providers have been trained, most of them City employees, on how to create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ clients. All employees of the Alexandria Police Department, Office of the Sheriff, the former Department of Human Services, and the former Office on Women have been trained as well as employees from the Fire Department, the former Community Services Board, and other City and non-profit agencies. School personnel, including teachers, administrators, nurses, and social workers have been also been trained. The leaders of nearly all of these agencies are incorporating LGBTQ cultural competency training in their departmental new employee curriculum.

Staff collects evaluations at all trainings, and the overwhelming response is positive. To date, the Task Force has trained more than 1,300 City service providers. Nine out of ten of these participants said that after training they were more aware of how to create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ clients. A number of participants have agreed with this City employee's comment, "I didn't even know I needed this class! Now that I've been through the training I realize how much it will affect the way I interact with clients." In every training service providers comment on how important the material is, that they have never had access to such training, and that this makes them a more competent service provider.

DISCUSSION: The Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs are seeking funds for a part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialist (OPS) for a one-year project to institutionalize training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ). This program, with the guidance of the LGBTQ Victim Services Task Force, which now consists of ten active members from the Alexandria community, will 1) expand training for allied professionals working with LGBTQ survivors and conduct "train the trainer" workshops; and 2) conduct outreach in the community about sexual and domestic violence services.

GRANT PERIOD: The 12-month grant period is July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. The grant application is due January 25, 2011.

FISCAL IMPACT: Receipt of up to \$15,000 for the one-year program. No City match is required. The program will end in one year and no additional City funds have been committed to continue the program.

STAFF:

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