

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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9-15-01

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 7, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUE: Receipt of the status report on implementation of the recommendations of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council receive this report.

BACKGROUND: On June 12, 2001, City Council received the CWLA report that reviewed the death of Katelyn Frazier who had been in the custody of the Department of Human Services. The CWLA had been asked to review the tragic death of Katelyn in order to assist the City in examining the policies and practices of its child welfare system, and to recommend improvements that would help the City protect its vulnerable children. The League's report contained a number of recommended improvements in the areas of policy, practice and procedure. At the June 12 meeting, Council asked that staff return in the fall with a status report on the implementation of these improvements.

DISCUSSION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) has begun to implement many of the recommendations made by CWLA. The major League recommendations are discussed below. A statement of all the League recommendations and the implementation status of each is attached (Attachment I).

Many of the CWLA recommendations focused on enhancing the City's assessment of the risk of abuse and neglect of children. Several means of increasing safety for children were recommended, and all are being implemented, including the use of structured risk assessments, a "new eyes" policy for assessment of injuries, an outside review of high-risk cases, requirements for criminal record clearances, and improved collaboration with all parties involved in a case.

Structured Risk Assessments. DHS is implementing a structured risk assessment tool for use in foster care cases. The tool is modeled after the one in use in Washington State. Washington State's risk assessment system requires social workers to describe or rate 17 factors that research has shown to be associated with increased risk of child abuse and neglect. The factors include

several categories such as: history of child abuse and neglect, child characteristics, parental functioning, parent-child interactions, and social and economic stress. This system is designed to assist social workers estimate the risk of chronicity, reoccurrence, and serious harm of child abuse and neglect, such as incidents which result in severe physical or emotional harm to children.

The risk assessment tool that DHS will use has been selected. Training will commence this month and is expected to be completed by the first of the year.

It is important to note that risk assessment systems do not predict outcomes in specific cases, but rather estimate the probability of outcomes for particular populations generally. Risk assessments do not remove the uncertainty of outcomes in specific cases. However, the use of a risk assessment tool does assist in making decisions in cases by guiding information gathering in a carefully structured manner and assessing factors that are associated with increased risk of abuse and neglect.

“New Eyes” Policy. To further enhance safety, DHS has implemented a “new eyes” policy requiring the review of any injury to a child by a social worker who is not associated with the foster care case. In addition, any complaint of abuse or neglect of a child in an active foster care case will continue to be investigated by a social worker unrelated to the case. This “new eyes” policy is designed to increase the objectivity of the assessment of possible or suspected injuries, and provides for multiple perspectives in a case.

Review of High-Risk Cases. In addition, DHS will continue to utilize outside professionals to review high risk foster care cases on a quarterly basis. Currently DHS is meeting with Fairfax and Arlington to develop an outside risk review process that will benefit all three jurisdictions. DHS will also conduct random reviews of all foster care cases by reviewing a minimum of 10 cases each month. The Director of Social Services, the Chief of Services, and supervisors not associated with a case will act as reviewers. A review format will be used that assesses areas such as adequacy of case documentation, compliance with policy, and use of the new risk assessment tool.

Criminal Record and State Registry Checks. Another means to increase child safety is to require criminal record checks of all adults who, along with a child in DHS custody, reside in the home of the child’s natural parent, including clearances from former states of residence. Under current Virginia law, the receipt of criminal history record information on these adults is only possible with the authorization of the adults themselves. Similarly, current State policy allows a check of the Central Registry for Founded Investigations (of child abuse and neglect) only with the authorization of such adults or a court order.

Staff has recommended to the State Board of Social Services that both these issues be reviewed and legislation be proposed that would aid localities in protecting children. We also will be proposing, for inclusion in the City’s legislative package, legislation (i) that would require criminal record checks on all household members in reunification cases and would allow local

agencies to gain access to the appropriate databases, and (ii) that would ensure agency access to the Central Registry for all such household members.

Case Collaboration. Finally, in the area of enhancing safety for children, a new case collaboration policy and process have been prepared and initiated. It is now DHS policy to convene those parties who are critical to a foster care case prior to a child's reunification with the family. DHS conducted its first case collaboration using this new policy that included the family, the foster parents, attorneys for all parties, the children's guardian, and key service providers. A full discussion of the plan going forward was held and consensus was achieved. This process allows all those involved in protecting the child and helping the family to share in the important reunification decision. It also allows all parties to share any reservations and to assure they are addressed. The first case collaboration proceeded smoothly and provides a road map for future collaborations.

Other CWLA recommendations related to improving documentation in case files and supervisory review, and the implementation of these recommendations is underway. DHS has drafted a local policy manual to supplement State policies and to target areas where CWLA recommended increased documentation. Case records are being reorganized, requirements regarding written documentation of supervision have been prepared and are in place, and monthly reporting forms for service providers and foster parents have been developed and will be required beginning in October.

In the staffing area, all of the new staff positions resulting from the League recommendations have been advertised. Interviews for the two supervisors and one administrative assistant will take place in September. Interested applicants for the clinical psychologist position thus far have been minimal, and the position is being readvertised this month. A consultant is assisting in the recruitment for the vacant Chief of Services position. The person in this position has responsibility for the supervision of the Director of Youth Prevention Services, seven Social Work Supervisors, and a clinical psychologist, and provides leadership for the work of the entire child welfare services section that includes approximately 53 staff members. Candidates for this position should be ready for City review by the end of September. The Chief of Services recruitment brochure is attached (Attachment II).

Finally, DHS has established a Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services that is composed of members of the Social Services Advisory Board (SSAB), foster parents, an adult foster child, a parent, representatives of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the Director of Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN), a guardian ad litem, a nurse and a psychologist. The first meeting was held on August 9 and future meetings will be held the third Thursday of every month. The Committee has a dual charge: first, to advise the Department and the City Manager regarding the implementation of the CWLA recommendations; and, second, to assist the Department in educating the public on the indicators of child abuse and neglect and the importance of reporting suspected abuse. The Committee members are dedicated and knowledgeable participants in the child welfare system, and are interested in helping the City protect its children. The Department welcomes this new partnership.

The Department has made a solid start in implementing the recommendations of CWLA. To assist it in continuing along this path, the Department will obtain the services of a firm or organization experienced in the child welfare area. This group will provide technical advice and assistance to the Department as it moves forward with the CWLA recommended improvements, and will help the Department and the Community Advisory Committee in planning the community education campaign. Many communities have faced the need to enhance their child welfare services, and the use of consultants who have assisted other communities will bring needed expertise to the City quickly.

The entire Department of Human Services is committed to implementing the CWLA recommendations, and the Department staff welcome changes that can assist in the work of providing protection to the City's children.

FISCAL IMPACT: The annual cost of the new staff positions is \$291,143 and will be funded with monies from federal reimbursement for local social services. We estimate that outside consultants for training, technical advice and assistance will cost approximately \$75,000, and that support of the Community Advisory Committee and the community education campaign will cost approximately \$25,000. These funds will also be derived from federal reimbursements for local social services.

ATTACHMENTS:

- I. Implementation of CWLA Recommendations
- II. Chief of Service Recruitment Brochure

STAFF:

Meg O'Regan, Director, Department of Human Services
Suzanne T. Chis, Director, Division of Social Services

Implementation of CWLA Recommendations

POLICY

1. Recommendation

The agency should establish policy and practice guidelines for decision-making related to family reunification which should include the use of structured risk, safety, and family assessment tools. Time frames for the use of such tools should be established to ensure safety at every contact and to facilitate structured decision-making, highlighting key risk and safety indicators. Additionally, assessment tools would provide documentation of the basis for specific decisions. Reunification should not occur without a risk and safety assessment that incorporates the review of informal supports, formal services available, mental health condition of caregiver, special needs of children, caregiver parenting ability, and household composition. Safety must be assessed and documented at each contact.

Status

The Department is implementing use of the Washington State risk assessment tool and process in combination with the State Child Protective Services risk and safety assessment. The new risk assessment tool will be utilized at various critical points in a foster care case, including the point of transfer of a case from Child Protective Services, every six months thereafter until case closure, at the development of the initial service plan, when court action is needed and when events occur in a family that change the level of risk. Two supervisors have participated in training on the Washington State tool. This risk assessment tool is designed to assist a social worker in comprehensively assessing the risk of harm from child abuse and neglect if a child is reunified. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of service plans, the parents' motivation to provide appropriate care and protection, and the impact of reunification on the child's well being. The training of social workers will begin in September and is expected to be completed by the first of the year. Plans also include bringing Washington State personnel to Alexandria to provide additional training and to inform the Community Advisory Committee on this new process.

2. Recommendation

The agency should implement policies and procedures that require the review of all active cases in which the child is injured on more than one occasion. Agency policy should require that the Child Protective Service Unit assess all injuries occurring in active cases. Investigation and assessments of injuries by the ongoing caseworker risks over-identification of the worker with the family, application of differential standards, and lack of objectivity.

Multidisciplinary teams, composed of agency and non-agency professionals, should be convened routinely to review high-risk cases.

Status

The “new eyes” policy went into effect on June 25, 2001. Any injury to a child in any active child welfare case is now being assessed by the Child Protective Services unit. All complaints of child abuse and neglect in active cases are continuing to be investigated by the Child Protective Services unit.

In the Spring of 2001, a review of high risk cases was conducted by a team of outside experts from surrounding jurisdictions, the State regional office and Virginia Commonwealth University. This fall, the agency will institute quarterly assessments of cases which, using our new risk assessment tool, are characterized as high risk. Those assessments will be done in collaboration with surrounding jurisdictions.

3. Recommendation

In addition to direct supervisory review of cases, the agency should establish written policy that requires random reviews of cases by staff other than the direct supervisor and caseworker. The results of the reviews should be shared with the supervisor and caseworker.

The agency should provide resources that will institutionalize quality improvement, quality assurance, and quality control processes within the organizational structure.

The agency should develop a mechanism for producing management reports based on the results of quality assurance activities. These reports should be used to improve practice and/or change policies.

Status

Written policy has been developed that requires a random review of cases. This review will be done by the Director of Social Services, the Chief of Services and supervisors not associated with the case. Random reviews will begin in September and a minimum of ten cases will be reviewed each month.

The Department has begun to research best practices in quality assurance programs in other states. Plans are in process to attend national quality assurance training and implementation will begin after technical assistance is received from the new consultants.

4. Recommendation

The agency should continue individualized education plans for staff, based on assessed needs and skill levels. Additionally the agency should track the transfer of learning through case documentation and supervisory conferences.

Status

Individualized staff training plans will continue to be prepared based on the particular training need of the staff member. New written policy on supervision includes monitoring the transfer of learning and assessing social workers’ training needs. Transfer of learning will be monitored by the supervisor as part of the weekly supervision process.

5. Recommendation

The agency should establish written policy that requires routine collateral contacts with service providers and other parties to the case.

The agency should develop related protocols with social service providers; legal counsel for the agency, parents, and children, and medical and behavioral health systems.

Status

The Department has developed written policy that requires social workers to maintain routine collateral contacts with service providers and other parties to the case. Full collaboration meetings will occur prior to reunification of any child in the agency's custody. Various key participants will include CASA volunteers, parents, service providers, guardians ad litem, and all involved attorneys.

The Department has contracts with all service vendors and will be requiring monthly written reports from all providers and from foster parents as of October 1, 2001. These monthly reports will be discussed with service providers to determine therapeutic progress or the need for change. These collaborations are in addition to those which now occur in the Family Assessment and Planning Teams meetings and other similar meetings.

6. Recommendation

Clearances should be obtained for every adult member in a household as a routine matter of policy and procedure. The agency should review and revise existing policy and related procedure to require that child abuse and criminal history clearances be obtained on all adults in the household, and that findings be documented and incorporated as key factors in decision making.

The policy should be specific that when an adult has resided in the current state for less than three to five years, clearances from the former state of residence should be obtained and included as a key factor in decision making.

Status

The Department is currently requiring criminal clearances on all adult household members in all foster care reunification cases. However, under current law, these clearances are only possible with the voluntary authorization of the household member. In addition, current state policy only allows a check of the central registry of child abuse and neglect for persons who are the subject of a complaint of child abuse and neglect; it does not allow a check of any household members in a reunification case. Staff have recommended to the State Board of Social Services that both these issues be reviewed and legislation proposed that would expand use of child protective service clearances and criminal records checks. The City Attorney is currently working on legislation to require criminal clearances in foster care situations and to expand child protective service clearances in reunification cases. The results of such checks are now part of the case record and are used in all decision making.

Expanded child abuse and criminal record checks, when available by law, will also be similarly incorporated into case decisions.

PRACTICE

1. Recommendation

The agency should establish written policy that requires weekly formal supervisory conferences between caseworkers and supervisors. Supervisory conferences provide support for caseworkers and an opportunity for supervisors to monitor casework activities. Supervisor-manager conferences facilitate identification of key service program issues, agency management issues, and opportunity to develop strategies for enhanced services to children and families.

Status

Written policy has been established requiring documentation of weekly formal supervisory conferences between social workers and supervisors.

2. Recommendation

The agency should require that the case dictation document the use of and participation in services, and the evaluation of service effectiveness.

Status

Written policy has been established requiring increased case record documentation regarding the use of services by the client family and the evaluation of these services. The case record format is in the process of redesign to assist in this change and to ensure that the record reflects and addresses worker's assessment of all services. Monthly written progress reports from service providers and foster parents will be required to address service utilization and effectiveness. These reports will be utilized by the social workers as part of the assessment of the family's progress and the assessment of risk factors.

3. Recommendation

The agency should develop written instructions to staff that outline the need for documentation in the case notes that includes concrete and therapeutic services provided, and related information from service and treatment providers. Both types of services should match the assessed level of safety and risk.

Status

Written policy has been established to increase documentation of all services provided. The use of a structured risk assessment tool will show the relationship between service provision

and safety and risk factors, and will help workers define the type and level of services needed to address assessed risk factors.

4. Recommendation

The agency should have standards of practice that require the verification of information related to a parent or caregiver's participation in services. Verification should include the frequency of participation and the quality of participation. This information should be documented in the case record dictation.

Status

Written policy has been established requiring verification of a parent's or care giver's participation in services. Monthly reports will be required from service providers.

5. Recommendation

The monitoring of caseworker contacts with foster children and foster parents should be an element in the quality assurance system and monitored by the supervisor through case record reviews.

Status

Current State policy requires social workers to visit with foster children and foster parents at least once per quarter in the foster home. Foster parents will also be completing a written monthly foster parent observation form. Supervisors will be required to monitor compliance with this policy through a routine review of the OASIS computer documentation of contacts and regular review of the case record.

6. Recommendation

Agency managers stated that all workers receive training on how to identify indicators of abuse and neglect. The State of Virginia mandates this training. The agency should ensure that all caseworkers, after receiving the training, are applying the learning to their documented risk and safety assessments.

In addition, the agency should develop a plan for educating all service providers and the public on the characteristics of child abuse and neglect and how to report it.

Status

The Department will continue to monitor social workers' application of their learning to their risk assessments. This will occur by case conferences, supervisory conferences and follow-up on training. Training on the new structured risk assessment tool is just beginning but will be continued throughout the year to assure consistency and appropriate use of the tool.

Training of mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect is continuing and occurs annually. The Child Protective Services unit just completed training for 150 new teachers. Community

education will be emphasized this year and implemented with the assistance of the Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services.

7. Recommendation

The agency should provide caseworkers with clear practice guidelines on how to make clinical connections between key observations related to the casework process, and case and service goals and objectives.

Practice guidelines should include direction as to when and how to use technical assistance from clinical consultants such as psychologist and psychiatrists.

Status

Practice guidelines on how to make clinical connections are being developed. The assistance of the yet to be hired clinical psychologist will be critical in this area, as will the ongoing assistance of the Department's family therapy consultant.

PROCEDURES

1. Recommendation

The agency, with the city attorney, should develop written guidelines for determining when appeals of court decisions are needed and when other court actions should be used to assure the safety, permanency, and well being of the child.

Status

Written guidelines will be implemented which require that a review of all relevant information, the evidence and the law will be made by the social workers, supervisors and managers and the City Attorney in determining whether an appeal is warranted.

2. Recommendation

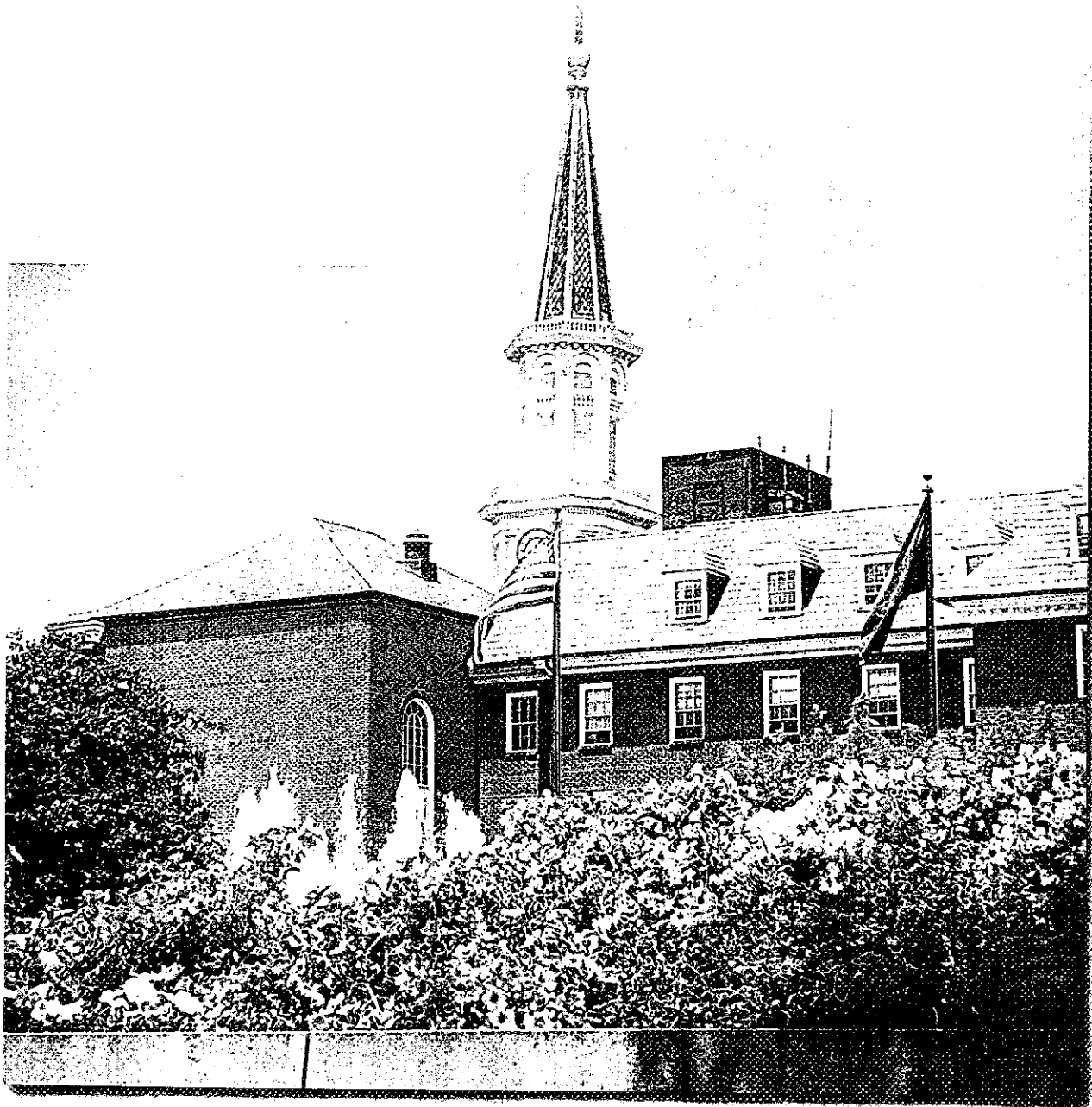
The Virginia ICPC Deputy Administrator provides training on all aspects of ICPC and is available for technical assistance. DHS supervisors and managers, and the Alexandria city attorneys, who provide counsel to the agency, should participate in training and request technical assistance when appropriate.

Status

This training occurred and was attended by Assistant City Attorney, judges, social workers, attorneys and various service providers. Technical assistance is utilized when needed by seeking case conferencing with the ICPC Administrator.

City of Alexandria, VA

Chief Social Worker Supervisor



The City

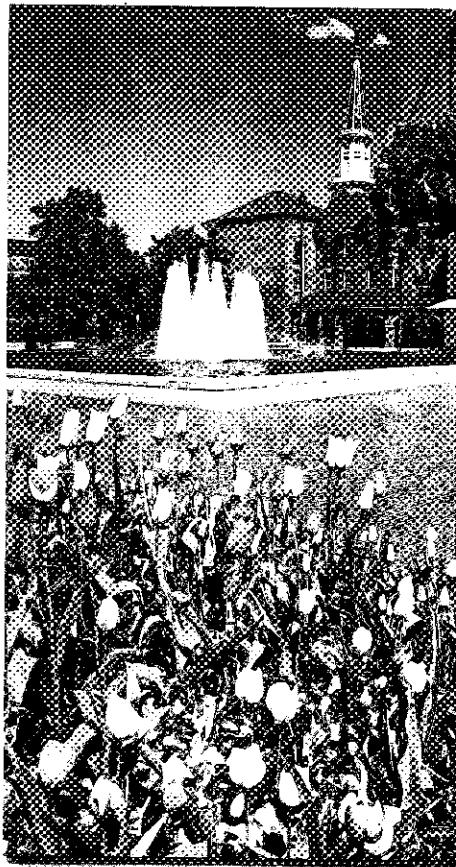
The City of Alexandria is located in northern Virginia and is bordered by the District of Columbia (Potomac River) and Arlington and Fairfax counties. With a population of 119,500 and a land area of 15.75 square miles, Alexandria is the seventh largest city in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Alexandria is unique - an historic place which keeps pace with the modern world. The City is part of a large metropolitan area and the nation's Capital, yet it has retained its historic character. About one-quarter of the town's 15 square miles has been designated as a national or local historic district. Thousands of buildings in these districts are monuments to the past, while being actively used by citizens for homes, businesses and museums.

Alexandria's first recorded beginnings were in 1669, when the site was included in a patent granted by colonial Governor William Berkeley of Virginia. The patent was purchased by John Alexander, the pioneer for whom the town was later named. In 1749, the House of Burgesses authorized a town of 60 acres, and George Washington helped lay out the town lots. With its incorporation in 1779, Alexandria was made a Port of Entry to the United States and a Customs House was established. Prospering, it became a city of fine houses and shops, a center of culture and trade, with George Washington and George Mason prominent in the community. In 1852, Alexandria acquired city status and its first charter.

Alexandria was founded almost 50 years before the District of Columbia. Its "Old and Historic District" is carefully preserved by a strict architectural review board, which monitors all changes. Historic landmarks include Robert E. Lee's boyhood home; Christ Church, where famous Virginia statesmen worshipped; and Gadsby's Tavern, a favorite meeting place of Lafayette and President Washington.

In addition to its historical sites, Alexandria boasts a variety of attractions. One of the metropolitan area's largest concentrations of international restaurants can be found in Old Town. The Torpedo Factory Art Center, located on the City's waterfront, provides an opportunity for the public to meet more than 200 professional artists and craftsmen. Sailing marinas and a surfaced biking trail allow visitors to enjoy the beautiful Alexandrian shore of the Potomac River.



The last decade has seen the City's economy become one of the strongest in the nation, driven by steady growth in its service-oriented employment base and income base. Following the national trends, the City has seen the greatest employment growth over the last decade in its service sector.

Alexandria continues to grow as a center for national association headquarters, a center for high technology and related headquarters operations, and a center for national, regional and divisional headquarters for corporations representing a broad range of fields. Alexandria is a primary business center in the Washington metropolitan area. Lower operational costs, unsurpassed access, diverse office opportunities, unique ambiance, and safe work and living environments are just several of the advantages enjoyed by business operations located there.

Alexandria is ranked as the fifth best "Big City for Doing Business" in the U.S. and is first in the rankings of the "Best Cities

for Women." The City of Alexandria has also been recently cited as one of only six cities in the nation to receive the coveted "Innovation Award for Outstanding Community Building" by the National League of Cities.

There are approximately 63,000 housing units (including apartments) in the City of Alexandria. The average assessed value of a single family home is about \$236,000, and the average assessed value of a residential condominium is about \$99,000.

The City Government

The City adopted the Council-Manager form of government in 1922. The governing body of the City is the City Council, which formulates policies for the administration of the City. The City Council is composed of a Mayor and six Council Members elected at-large, on a partisan basis, for a three-year term (not staggered). The Mayor is chosen on a separate ballot and presides over sessions of the Council, but is not vested with the power of veto or authority over other Members of the Council. The Vice Mayor, by practice is the member of the Council who received the largest number of votes at the regular City election.

The Alexandria Council conscientiously operates under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which prohibits closed sessions of the Council except for specific matters regarding personnel, pending litigation and land acquisition.

Accordingly, nearly all sessions of the City Council are open to the public, where citizens actively participate in discussion.

Alexandria has had a strong tradition of self-government since its founding in 1749. It is an independent city (Virginia cities have no county affiliation) and derives its governing authority from a Charter granted by the Virginia General Assembly.

The City budget provides for approximately 2,100 full-time employees, excluding school employees. The City of Alexandria's FY2000 approved Total City and Schools Operating Budget is \$361.4 million. The FY2000-FY2005 approved Capital Improvement Program (CIP) recommends a six-year, \$118 million program of public improvements.

The Position and Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services serves the diverse needs of Alexandria's citizens by promoting economic and social independence and self-sufficiency. The Department operates with a budget of about \$41.9 million and an allocated staff of approximately 220. The Department is organized into four major Divisions: Operations, Family Services, JobLink, and Community Programs. The Operations Division provides overall management, planning, budget, finance, personnel, facilities and supplies, data and quality control, and information systems support. The JobLink Division provides employment services for welfare recipients, students of the Northern Virginia Community College's high technology training, high school studies and any other Alexandrians looking for work. The Community Programs Division provides services that are designed to aid specific populations in the City to become self-sufficient and less dependent on the human services system.

The Division of Social Services/Family Services is mandated by federal and state laws to provide financial assistance and social services to the Alexandria community. Services are aimed at meeting basic needs, strengthening family life, and protecting children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The major programs administered by the Division are: Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF); General Relief; Fuel Assistance; Refugee Assistance; State/Local Hospitalization; Children's Medical Security Insurance Plan (CMSIP); Adoption Programs; Foster Care; and Child Protective Services. The current annual budget for the Division is about \$23.7 million with an allocated staff of approximately 100.

The Chief Social Worker Supervisor is a key management position in the Division of Social Services/Family Services. The overall responsibilities of the Chief Social Worker Supervisor include the supervision of the Director of Youth Prevention Services, seven Social Work Supervisors, and a

Clinical Psychologist. This position leads the work of the entire Child Welfare Services section of the Division that includes approximately 55 staff. The Chief Social Worker Supervisor reports to the Director of the Division of Family Services.

Typical duties of the Chief Social Worker Supervisor position include:

- Supervises, plans, and manages the administrative aspects of providing services, which include training, scheduling, determining personnel needs, monitoring the quality and quantity of work, and participating in policy development;
- Evaluates the effectiveness of program operations and recommends policy changes and updates;
- Confers with colleagues in the Division of Social Services, Department of Human Services, and others to identify areas of cooperation and coordination; and maintains awareness of federal and state laws, and regulations and local requirements and policies impacting services to children;
- Develops, recommends, and through subordinate managers, implements internal operating policies and procedures; and monitors the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and services;
- Supervises, researches and evaluates the effectiveness of program/service operations;
- Plans, assigns, reviews and evaluates the work of subordinates, and recruits and helps select new employees;
- Provides leadership in the development, modification, implementation and administration of training programs for staff;
- Holds regular meetings with staff to discuss case methods and practices, including special attention to more difficult and extensive cases/problems;
- Plans and coordinates work load and scheduling of staff as well as establishing goals and objectives;
- Provides consultation to those supervised on difficult problems and makes decisions requiring high-level action;



- Represents the Division and Department in the community, and with state, regional and local organizations and professional associations as well as on internal and external-committees and task forces as appropriate;
- Prepares regular and special reports as required; controls and monitors expenditures; prepares corrective action plans; and recommends hiring, promotion, transfer, discipline, or termination of personnel;
- Develops plans for intensive prevention and rehabilitative services; and
- Performs related work as required.

The new Chief Social Work Supervisor will lead Child Welfare Services in its work to implement changes to enhance protection for the City's vulnerable children. Several new policies and practices are currently being developed related to risk and safety assessments, supervisory oversight, improved collaboration, and creation and involvement of a Community Advisory Committee to promote public education on child abuse and neglect. The Department of Human Services will also be expanding its resources with the hiring of additional supervisors, a Clinical Psychologist and Administrative Assistant.

The Candidate

Education and Experience

The preferred candidate will have a master's degree in social work or related area. Extensive experience in social work including clinical, supervisory and managerial responsibilities in social services is required.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

The selected candidate should have knowledge of:

- Current social, economic and health issues affecting children and their families;
- Social work principles, methods, practices and treatment approaches;
- Human behavior (including normal and abnormal behavior, growth and development, and group dynamics);

In addition, he/she should be able to:

- Plan, manage, and evaluate the needs of an organization (for example, budgeting, staffing and resource allocation);
- Provide strong leadership, including the ability to make good decisions involving complex/critical issues (for example, unusual cases, politically sensitive issues, personnel actions, and resource allocation);
- Establish and maintain effective relationships with clients, employees, the community, and the general public;

- Communicate well in writing and verbally, including presenting information and recommendations effectively;
- Interpret and explain federal, state, and local service programs and agency administrative requirements and procedures;
- Analyze and compile information and social services data, work effectively with multiple data systems, and exercise sound judgement in arriving at conclusions; and
- Plan, supervise and review the work of subordinate staff.

Management Style and Personal Traits

The ideal candidate should be someone who is proactive, energetic and comfortable working with people. He/she should enjoy new challenges, be able to build partnerships, and be an advocate for services, while recognizing the priorities and resource constraints of the organization.

In addition, this person should be an accomplished manager who can provide purpose and direction while taking ownership; and being visible and accessible to staff, colleagues and the community. He/She should be a leader with excellent interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as analytical ability and a strong customer-service orientation.

Finally, the ideal candidate should have a high degree of integrity and an appreciation for cultural and community diversity.

Compensation

The salary for this position is open within an established range of \$59,489 to \$94,059, and will be dependent upon the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate. In addition, benefits are provided which include: annual leave, holidays and sick leave; a retirement plan; health insurance, dental plan, life insurance, and long-term disability insurance; optional deferred compensation; savings bonds; credit union membership; catastrophic illness leave bank; and an employee assistance program.

How to Apply

Send resumes or nominations **immediately** to:

Norman C. Roberts, *Vice President* or
Robert L. Neher, Jr. *Regional Director*,
Executive Recruitment Services

MAXIMUS

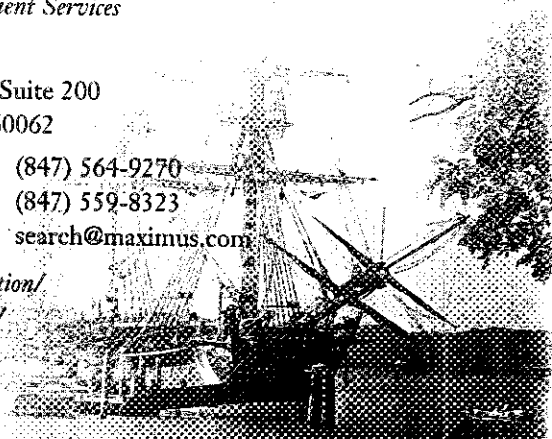
60 Revere Drive, Suite 200
Northbrook, IL 60062

Telephone: (847) 564-9270

Facsimile: (847) 559-8323

E-mail: search@maximus.com

*An Affirmative Action/
Equal Opportunity/
ADA Employer*



**ALEXANDRIA
MEETS THE
CHALLENGES
FACING
CHILD WELFARE**

Department of Human Services
City Council Presentation
September 15, 2001

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF KATELYN FRAZIER THE CITY ASSESSED HOW THE ENTIRE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FAILED HER AND HAS BEGUN THE WORK OF IMPROVING IT.

WE BELIEVE THESE IMPROVEMENTS WILL ENHANCE OUR ABILITY TO PROTECT THE CITY'S CHILDREN FROM THE KIND OF HARM SUFFERED BY KATELYN.

WE ASK OUR COMMUNITY TO JOIN US TO BRING ABOUT THESE SAFEGUARDS FOR OUR CHILDREN.

New Safeguards to Protect Our Children

1. A new written Risk Assessment tool adopted
 - To Rate 17 factors that could indicate abuse or neglect
 - To estimate the risk of chronic or recurring behavior
 - To guide and structure decision making in cases
 - To be used in all reunification cases
2. New regional teams of Risk Review Experts to be created
 - To identify high risk cases
 - To assess new approaches
 - To evaluate current services and needed changes
 - To use in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax

New Safeguards to Protect Our Children

3. Random Risk Reviews conducted in active cases

For oversight on the use of Risk Assessment tools

To note risk trends and suggest changes

To identify training or compliance issues

To evaluate case documentation

4. "New Eyes" used to assess injuries in active cases

To enhance objectivity and introduce new perspectives

Injuries and new complaints in a Foster Care case are assessed by social workers and supervisors not associated with the case

New Safeguards to Protect Our Children

5. New legislation proposed on criminal and CPS checks

For all adults regularly in the home

When foster child is reunited with a parent

When foster child visits the parental home

To access criminal and CPS records from Virginia and prior home states

6. New policy begun to require adult family members to agree to criminal and CPS checks.

Lack of cooperation can hinder planned reunification

Proposed law, if passed, makes their agreement unnecessary

New Safeguards to Protect Our Children

7. Community collaboration on active Foster Care cases increased

Critical parties convene before reunification

Parents, foster parents, service providers, court appointed advocates and attorneys are invited

Reunification plan is discussed with an eye toward consensus

Unresolved issues are presented to the court

8. Community Advisory Board Convened

Members are from SSAB, Healthy Families of Alexandria, CASA, SCAN, Foster Parents, Attorneys, psychologist, nurse, parent and adult foster child

To advise DHS on implementing changes and lead a community education effort

New Safeguards to Protect Our Children

9. Child Welfare consultant to be retained for training and expert advice for staff and the Advisory Committee
10. New Staff to reduce span of supervision, for clinical expertise and new administrative tasks
11. New Community Education Campaign
 - To recognize and report abuse and neglect of children
 - To clarify DHS role in child abuse prevention, child safety and protection, and foster care

DRAFT**CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

Special Meeting -- September 15, 2001

Verbatim Transcript of Docket Item No. 17

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17. Receipt of Status Report on Implementation of the Child Welfare League of America's Recommendations.

Mayor: Just a couple of comments before we get the, the staff presentation. Needless to say, this, this case has had more than its share of, of notoriety and controversy, particularly over, over the summer. And I, and I think we all recognize that the system had a, had a tragedy with the death of Katelyn Frazier and what we as a Council I think need to do and we as a, as a City and City administration need to do is focus on, on strengthening that system so that it, it does not have another similar tragedy. I mean our job as the City Council is to enact policies, practices, procedures, approve them, that will improve this, this system in Alexandria. I mean we can't change the past, but we can do our best to improve the, the future, and you know I have faith in the City Manager and the City administration to do just that, to, to implement these changes. I also have, have faith in the department that we can effectively make these changes. We're going to get an update now from, from staff regarding the recommendations that were in the, the Child Welfare League of America report, explain what's happened over the summer in terms of, of how we've progressed on these, these recommendations, and then, and then we'll have some discussion amongst the, the Members of Council as well as, as the City Manager. Phil, do you want to say anything now or do you want Meg to just proceed?

Sunderland: Well, I'm going to have Meg do it. I mean just to put it in context, in June we delivered the report to you. The report had a number of recommendations. We indicated that over the summer we would begin putting them into affect, and we've done just that. A number of the improvements or changes are in affect today, a number are in the way of, on the way of being put into affect, and a couple will have a, a longer term. We have a little presentation by Meg, a Power Point, so why don't, why don't we move into that and go over the 11 or 12 main, main improvements and tell you where we are on them.

Mayor: Meg.

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Mayor: But there is, there is a role for those citizens to play –

O'Regan: Yes. A very definite role. Yes.

Mayor: Directly in the community education program. Ms. Pepper then, I think, Mr. Speck.

Speck: I just had a question.

Mayor: You had a question on this item?

Pepper: Well, I had a question on the item too.

Mayor: Well, go ahead.

Pepper: I wanted to know first of all how many kids are in the foster care system?

O'Regan: Well, we have, we keep our data on an annual basis actually so this data is a little bit dated. Right now the number of children that we have in foster care is 138. Last year we had 144. This is one full year of data that I'm giving you. It's not year-to-date data. They are not all in foster homes. 62% of them are in regular foster homes, 20% are in specialized treatment residences, and 11% are on their own or in a relative home, and about 4% are in dependent living status, which is the teenagers who are aging out of foster care.

Mayor: Mr. Speck and then Ms. Eberwein.

Speck: This is just a question on really the last point that you were making about the, the conflicting legislation between reunification and protection of the child. For the last few months I think like a lot of us I've learned more about the child protective and welfare systems than I ever imagined I would, and one of the things that has really struck me is this conflict on the legislation where you're really asking the welfare worker to be trying to accomplish two things that may compete with one another. Does this require legislation on our part? Is this state-initiated legislation or is it federal?

O'Regan: Well, it's federal and state. The, the state picks up the obligations devolved to it by the federal legislation but the Safe Families and Children Act is the

legislation that was passed I believe in 1988? Is that right or '94? No, it was even later Suzanne tells me.

Mayor: Well, whatever.

O'Regan: 1997. But it, it codifies the very firmly held belief that we have in our society that children should be raised by their own blood, and this is something that I think that our society has, has held on to as an important belief system because it's a, it's a good one. If your child, if you cannot raise your own child, perhaps your sister can or perhaps your godmother can, and in an extended family where a child is able to remain in that family or remain with blood so that everyone knows all of the children in that child's life, this is the best thing to do. And I don't think any child welfare professionals would argue with that. But there are times when we have parents who are just unable to develop the competencies that they need to, to have and they don't have the kind of a family setting that I just described so that they're unable, truly, to raise the child. And when the pressure begins and when something happens, the car doesn't work, the washing machine doesn't work or a child is out of control in a teenage setting or something like that, whenever the pressure hits in that family, that mother's competencies come to bear. And if she doesn't have them, the child could be at risk. So, in my view, and what I've thought about over the past nine months since Katelyn's death is that we need to open this dialogue and we need to begin to discuss this in our community. We have a very service-rich and caring and loving community, and it is in this community that I think we need to begin this dialogue. And I think it's a dialogue that the nation needs to engage in, and I think we need to be the first.

Pessoa: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Ignacio and then Claire.

Pessoa: If I could just amplify on the answer to David's question. Within the parameters of the federal law there is room within the state-enabling legislation to put more emphasis on the safety aspect rather than the reunification aspect, and that's one of the proposals that we'll be bringing forward as part of our legislative package to bring to the General Assembly.

Mayor: Okay. Claire?

Eberwein: Mr. Mayor? Yeah, I was wondering if Mr. Sunderland had any follow-up comments from Meg's presentation? Okay. All right. I'd like to make some comments and then I have some, some questions. I think the City and

the City Council and City staff all learned a lot over the summer about making sure that we have better communication with, within ourselves, right here between the Council and staff, and I think we all probably read *The Washington Post* articles about the sheer number of abuse cases over there which, and they were heart-breaking and appalling. One thing you said raised a question. You said that the extended family was an option in this sort of blood relation circle. Those articles made quite clear that that was not an option, at least in the District. One of the children was in the care and custody of the grandparents and was told by the police that when the mother had, was through being examined by the psychiatrists to see whether she was stable enough to handle the children that they would arrest the grandparents if they did not turn the child back over to the mother. So your comment raises an issue that I would like at some point for Ignacio to come back to us on. Is it, is it really possible for this extended family situation to occur? According to that article it was not. I'm not asking you to answer that now because I don't know if, if it's a District law, if it's federal.

O'Regan: I can answer that.

Eberwein: Okay.

O'Regan: There is a requirement that when we look to placements for our foster care children that we look to the extended family first. And if there is a person in that family who has the competencies and the willingness to take the child in that's the person that we will place the child with. And that's a creature of law. And the law applies to the District as well as to us.

Eberwein: So what you're saying is that what the District did because the child ultimately was returned to the mother and was murdered. You're saying that was a failure on the part of the police department of the District.

O'Regan: No. No. I wouldn't, I don't know the case.

Eberwein: I mean that wasn't stated in the article. The article implied that legally the child had to go back to the mother.

O'Regan: It, it could be a variety of reasons. The parent, if the parent engages in all of the services in a service plan that is submitted to the court and approved by the court and the, and the parent scrupulously observes everything that is required in that service plan, then that child will go back to that parent. That's the law. That's the reunification law. If the child is in foster care with the grandmother, the grandmother also has to have the competencies

and the willingness to take this child. The child just can't be sent to a, to a member of the extended family without continuous supervision, continuous services and a continuous effort in that family to, to work with that child and, and the foster parent or the, or the extended family member as well as the natural parent. That is what we do in our foster care system. If there is a failure, it, I don't know what the failures would be in the District. I do know that I worked in New York City and I did not do the child welfare end of the work in New York City, but I can tell you that the, the, there are many, many serious endemic and systemic problems in those large, large networks of foster care. We, in Alexandria, have, I don't, I don't believe in recent memory that we have had a death of a child which is why this rocked us to our very professional souls because it was, it was so unexpected for us.

Eberwein: Yeah. And I, and I didn't bring the District as a way of, it just, you're, when you talked about the extended family I thought that this clearly isn't happening in the cases that we read about. I think that when you read all of those cases what it should be seen as is a call to the public to renew our efforts to protect children wherever they are. And I am, and I've been very critical, I think, since last spring, at least based on what I read in the original report that we received from the Child Welfare League. I am after this presentation, after carefully reading through your documents, I'm confident that we will do better here in Alexandria. Some of my comments here come from issues that I raised last June. I'd like to really praise the, the new eyes policy. I think that is probably one of the most important things that you've put into place. What we had before was you essentially mixed the jobs. The current social service worker whose job was to reunify the family was also tasked with looking at new abuse, and that put them in a, an internal conflict where they are trying to create trust with the parent. That they're trying to raise the skills of so that that parent can care for their children and yet you are told to at the same time suspect that parent, investigate that parent for abuse to protect the child. It's an inherent conflict that is, I believe, impossible for a social worker to do without being literally torn apart in the process. So, I, I absolutely applaud the second eyes. It should be a completely independent person who looks at allegations of child abuse, investigates the bruises, sends the child to the doctor, and of course informs the social worker, but that person should be independent of having to counsel the family on how to reunite themselves as a family unit. The comments about putting it in our legislative package with regard to the criminal history background of the adults residing in the household, and I, and I listened to Mr. Pessoa's remarks. My question: is there any reason why the City cannot now use a refusal by an adult to submit to such a background check as an element of our assessment with

regard to the placement of the child. Not the defining factor, because legally at this point perhaps we can't say if you don't submit to this check we won't put the child back. But can it be one of your assessment tools even before you would go to court in saying that we feel uncomfortable with this situation.

O'Regan: Yes.

Eberwein: And, and will it be?

O'Regan: We have, we have implemented that policy shortly after Katelyn's death, and we did have a policy before that but I don't think we reiterated it so strongly with our staff as we now have. And our policy was to, to try to get the other persons who are in the household to submit to criminal records checks and CPS checks. And mostly they did. The, the time that they would not is the time that we would have to go into court, and we would have to argue before the court that this was essential before we sent this child home. We would have to have some ground with the court. Either we, we had, knew that there was a, a criminal complaint against the person in another state. We would need some, some grounds to present to the court. So what we really try to do when we develop our reunification plan is to talk with all of the people in the household and tell them how essential and critical it is, and we are almost always successful with that. Our new policy will be –

Eberwein: Well, I, I do, I would like to see renewed emphasis on having that be something that you would document.

O'Regan: Of our service plan.

Eberwein: Yeah. I think, I think that would be good. I think your case collaboration suggestion is excellent in uniting all the parties. I think that, you know, the foster parents, the attorneys, the children's guardians, the family in one conference room is, and I'm glad to see you've done it on a trial run and it's been successful. I, I think that has, as well, that along with the fresh eyes is probably one of the more significant things you're proposing here. The community advisory committee with the different social service agencies and volunteers in the City I think that's a good, good proposal also. I compliment you also. It seems to me that you and the City Manager have incorporated what I see as perhaps the result of some of the conversations that occurred in August between various Council Members and City management and staff, and that you're looking to an outside service firm now to help the department implement the changes, advise you on the

changes as we lock these procedures into our, our system, and I, I think that's very good. I wanted to bring up another issue and this one is a little bit tougher. If you could come back and perhaps report to us on whether or not you would recommend and, and we hope of course that a death would never happen again, but it seems to me, I would like some comment from the City Manager and staff back to Council on whether it would be helpful and, and I will tell you I think it would be, but it's only my opinion, to put the social service workers who are in direct supervisory positions with the child on administrative leave automatically when there is a death similar to what they do in the police department. Let me tell you why I think that's important. There are, there are two ways that that's important, and I think the way that we handled it quite frankly, was worse coming from both directions. In terms of public confidence it allows you in an impartial way to know that that person is no longer having direct, a direct supervisory position over the child, and it also, it's similar to what the police department is. It removes that officer from the street until there's investigation. There is no pro or con to it. It's just an automatic policy. There is no accusation involved in it. When you then remove someone after you have additional information, maybe from a court case, it looks, it's very negative, and I think that puts, again, the social service provider, the case worker in a, in a very difficult position, no matter what their actions, whether they were absolutely proper or absolutely not proper or somewhere in between. But when you do it after it's gone to court, the implication is there, and I think that is very tough on the employee. I object to that. I really do. It, maybe it's the lawyer in me, but it bothers me no matter which way you look at it. Whether you think the person did something wrong or didn't think the person did something wrong, I think it creates an implication from either direction that's very difficult for that individual. So –

Mayor: I'm sorry for, for breaking in. I missed part of the discussion. Is, and I think your, your recommendation has a fair amount of merit. Are you asking that it be considered?

Eberwein: Yes, I am. And I'm asking for staff to come back and tell us what they think about it, and, and then allow Council to look at that because I think it's a policy issue.

Mayor: Oh, absolutely.

Eberwein: And, and it's troubled me a lot that we handled it the way we did. My, my only final comment is really to, to talk about something that I, I said in June and that, that Mr. Speck brought up, and that is the goal of uniting families.

We are all aware there are some people who are just not equipped to be parents, for whatever reason. And they may be able to be taught to be good parents. They may be able to get over whatever, if it's a drug addiction they may be able to get past that and become good parents. What I am seeing here, I hope, and I think what Council's urging you unanimously to promote, is that the safety of the child in our City needs to come first and we need to move balance that way because I think some of us are not convinced always that it's the best situation to be in a blood relationship. There are some situations that just don't work. They're not healthy for anybody involved. It doesn't matter whether it's a blood relation or not. It's not safe psychologically, physically, whatever to be in that situation and I think that you people are, are the best able to judge that. You're trained in that, and I would like to see us tip the scales this way, and I think my Council, fellow Council Members agree with me.

O'Regan: And I, I would offer that all of the work that we've proposed today would do that. Safety of the child is our paramount concern. The reunification law, once the direction is taken that we must, that are now moving toward reunification, we, we place the child unless there is danger or risk. That's what the law says. So, all of these safeguards that we're now putting into place will mean that we will be talking with all of the important, key people in the case prior to going to court, we will be discussing all of these things openly and candidly with all of the persons who are involved and intricately involved with this case, and we're hoping that that is going to bring about a communion of effort when we do before the court in terms of, of changing a reunification plan.

Mayor: Anything else, Claire? Del.

Pepper: Mr. Mayor, I'm going to move that we receive this report but that we also have the department come back with a comment on the issue of automatically putting on leave with pay a person who is involved in a case, a supervisor or a case worker who's involved in a case of this critical concern. But there's a second thing ...

Euille: Second.

Mayor: Motion by Mrs. Pepper, seconded by Mr. Euille.

Pepper: And I have a comment. I felt that, I think Joyce has a comment too. I think that certainly one of the very important aspects of all this is going to be your going into the community and talking to people. I think you'll find that there's a good bit of unrest and concern, unresolved feelings, and I

think that by going into the community that may be very helpful. I think it may be an education process on both sides. Thank you.

Mayor: Joyce.

Woodson: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I have a couple of questions from the presentation and then I have also a question about the fiscal impact from the docket item. So I'll ask that one first and then I can go on to the presentation. Under the fiscal impact the new staff positions, almost \$300,000, and I'm just wondering where that money is going to come from and if it was there, why we weren't using it. Where's that money coming from?

Sunderland: Well, it's going to come from reimbursements from the federal government that we're getting under a, what's called a revenue maximization effort, and I don't know if Meg or Suzanne wants to give more detail than I can.

O'Regan: I can explain it in, in annoying detail or short.

Woodson: Well, I, I don't want annoying detail and I don't think --

Mayor: Give us the Reader's Digest version.

Woodson: Yeah, we've got two meetings today. We want real short.

O'Regan: In the past three years Suzanne Chis and I, both of us have a, a mind for money and what we have done is looked at all of the services and all of the efforts that we have in the Department of Human Services, and to look at how we might be able to maximize our federal and state revenue. So we have two ways of doing that. One is to look at our services in terms of prevention of foster care and if we can do that, we can pull down a federal share and the other is to look at what are the reasonable and necessary expenses for running the Social Services program throughout the City and throughout the Department and if we show that a service that we have is, is a necessary expense to the running of the, and the operation of the Social Services program, we can pull down additional federal funds. So that almost \$300,000 comes from that avenue.

Woodson: Okay. So that's, it's not going to come from, from City tax revenue.

O'Regan: No, this is new money.

Woodson: Okay. And the new money is there because we are seeking some different piece of the pie that we had sought before.

O'Regan: Correct. Correct.

Woodson: But was that there for us to seek before or is this a new pie?

O'Regan: It was but the Commonwealth of Virginia had not sought it and –

Woodson: I see.

O'Regan: We were able to, to work in conjunction with the state department of Social Services and become the model for the use of those funds and the application for those funds.

Woodson: Good. Okay. Then I have a couple of questions on the advisory board membership and then on item 11 from your presentation, the community education campaign. And I was just curious, two things. How was the membership, the complement decided and under parent is this a parent generally or is this the parent who has a child in foster care? What parent is it?

O'Regan: This is a parent with a child in foster care.

Woodson: Okay. That's what I thought. Okay. And then the, the overall membership–

O'Regan: I'm sorry, Ms. Woodson, I'm being corrected.

Chis: The parent is one that has had her children in foster care previously –

Woodson: Okay.

Chis: Successfully received services. Was reunited. Her children and her were reunited and she's successfully parenting.

Woodson: Okay. But that, but she was a parent who had a child in foster care. Okay. That's what I thought. And then the complement of this board, what was the, what were the factors that lead to forming the board with these particular representatives?

O'Regan: Well. We wanted an advisory board that would be candid with us and that was one of our first requirements so we looked to those, some of the groups of people that we had worked with who had over the years raised various issues with us and the department. Guardians ad litem had raised various issues with us. CASA had raised various issues with us. SCAN had. Other

attorneys had. Our foster parents did. We thought that the, we needed to hear all of that and put everybody in a room so that we could discuss any of these issues going forward with the new implementation plan. We didn't want, whatever had been dealt with in a way that left some issues before, we wanted to make sure we were dealing with everything in an open and candid way now. So that was really our, our basic premise.

Woodson: Okay. Is this a – Oh, sorry.

O'Regan: The second was they had a professional understanding of our work and that they were professionals engaged in the work in some way.

Woodson: Okay. Is this a closed board or is it open to new membership?

O'Regan: Well, we are now looking for members who would increase the diversity of the board.

Woodson: Okay. And the foster parents that you have listed here under this membership, these are parents who currently have children in foster care as opposed to the parent. I mean just to distinguish between foster parents and parent.

O'Regan: Right.

Woodson: Okay. So these are the ones who currently have kids in the system and the parent is one who –

Chis: A foster parent is –

Woodson: Oh, I'm sorry. I know exactly what it is. I'm confused. It's not an unusual state up here sometimes.

O'Regan: and have one of our children in their homes.

Woodson: Yes. I understand exactly who they are. Right. Okay. Moving right along to item 11 which is much easier, I have questions about this campaign. There are a couple of issues that I'm hoping that you're going to be addressing in the campaign and I'd just like to know if there, if they aren't on your plan if you could add them to your plan. The first issue is social service needs. I am concerned that your financial needs, you know, your staffing needs, your image needs are going to be addressed in this campaign. I asked the question about money and where it was coming from because we get a good number of complaints about how taxpayer dollars

are spent and invariably social services are one of the places where state, local, federal dollars are perhaps more easily taken, and that concerns me a great deal because taxpayers perhaps are not as interested in having dollars spent there but yet are the first ones to scream and holler if there is a problem that comes up. And those two things sort of are exclusive. If you don't have enough money then there's more likely that, that you're going to have problems. So I'd, I'd like to make certain that within your education campaign, the general population understands what you do, what it takes to do what you do, both in manpower, in emotional stability and in financial support. The second thing and the third thing have to do with families. What kind of an education component for family violence and what kind of an education component for overall family health? I think the City has said on more than one occasion that they want to be seen as City, as a City that's family-friendly, but we certainly have families in crisis and I don't know. I wish I did. I don't know what the City does for families in crisis, and, and to be perfectly honest, I'm not really sure I know what the City does to be so family-friendly. You know, clearly we have parks and, and other kind of things that lots of other cities have so I'm not real sure as a representative of the City that I could represent very well what it is that we do to distinguish ourselves. So, I'd like to see that as a part of this campaign that we address the fact that we have significant issues with family violence and with family health, and by that I mean mental health, and perhaps in so doing we can, you know, maybe avoid some of the image problems that agencies have. Not necessarily our social service agency, but agencies, social service agencies in general, but in particular given this horrible experience that we had over this past year with Katelyn Frazier that we avoid some of the misconceptions that have run rampant now in the community in this blood lust that, you know we certainly have seen. I think sometimes when people understand what the issues are with what all of the issues are then it is a little more difficult to, to ask for heads to roll when that kind of education is, is available and not after the fact but before the fact. So I'm looking for more proactive approaches from this body. I'm not sure if it's the community advisory board who's responsible for this education campaign. If it's the City who's responsible primarily or a combination of the two. I don't who, but I would like to see those three things addressed.

O'Regan: I would just like to state that the, the concept that we have is that I would do it along with certain members of my staff and if anyone on the advisory board wished to join me in this that we would invite their participation. Certainly, all of the people who have a particular expertise.

Woodson: Yeah. Well –

O'Regan: The intention is that it would be pretty much a staff organized –

Woodson: In this campaign.

O'Regan: Right.

Woodson: Well, it clearly has to be a strategic campaign and it has to be something that is mounted and supported by the City. It can't just be a, an idea or something that you talk about. I mean it has to be something that's, that's out there in public much like the, the Mayor's teen pregnancy program was very public and I can't say how successful it was but it certainly was in everyone's eyes.

Mayor: We'll know in about nine months, I guess.

Woodson: Yeah, we will know in nine months. But that's the kind of thing that I'm looking for. Something that's proactive as opposed to reactive. This knee jerk stuff really is not very effective. We clearly have lots of families, lots of children, who are in need. They're not necessarily in the foster care system.

O'Regan: Right.

Woodson: Or even in the social service system, but they're out there in need and I think that it is incumbent upon us as, as a City that you know purports to be family-friendly to address some of that and this seems to me to be an excellent opportunity and a calling.

Mayor: Just to, to echo a little bit on Joyce's part, I would urge you strongly to, to encourage the community advisory board to be part of the education, community education program. For a couple of reasons. Number one, I think it's important to have, you know that, their expertise from their particular professional background. But, but more importantly, I think the message that is desired to be delivered, should be delivered and, effectively so, comes, comes best from, you know, the community.

O'Regan: Right.

Mayor: Not to say that you or, or your staff can't give an effective presentation and, and deliver a point, but I think, and, and you should be involved as well. But I think it is reinforced when there is citizen involvement, citizen engagement in, in that program, and so I, you know, I would expect that

they would play a much larger role than just coming up with ideas of where you should give the presentation.

O'Regan: But we are, we are, we only are at our second meeting but it is certainly our hope that they will lead the, the campaign with us.

Mayor: No. I understand. And, and I don't think we're trying to dictate what they do. I mean obviously their, the group and, and we want them engaged, and, and we want their ideas and their, and their input and their and their commitment in, you know, if we're dictating and directing what they should do, we're not going to get that. But I, I guess it's, it's you know, Joyce and, and I'm echoing her sentiment that I think it's important that, that, you know, that we engage that advisory panel in, in this community education program and that, and that, you know, we, we get maybe a little bit closer to individual citizens and, and focus a little bit on, on families and trying to reach out to them rather than just sort of a broad we'll go to a civic association here or the Rotarian lunch there. Maybe we need to look at smaller groups that might be either faith-based, you know, the, the youth groups or the, the family support groups at churches in Alexandria as another, as an, I'm not, We don't need to plan it right now but I'm, I just bring that up as an example because I think trying to direct it families is an important suggestion that Joyce, that Joyce makes. Bill Euille and then, then we do have a, a motion on the floor.

Euille: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I, again I echo and certainly agree with all that's been said as offered by both Ms. Eberwein, Ms. Pepper and Ms. Woodson and that education is the key and one of the important components here. Likewise, having gone through in the last four years a complete from top to bottom review of the Human Services Department's operating budget and programs along with other colleagues of mine that were, that were formerly on this City Council, and then more recently we did the, the Mental Health Department programs for the sole reason as, as is expressed by Ms. Woodson that a lot of the citizens, the community as a whole, are not always cognizant of all that these various agencies do. We know that they, they have large budgets, they expend a lot of money, time, service, in delivery of services but, you know, what are the measurements? What are the outcomes, and so forth. So, I've, I for one feel very comfortable having gone through the exercise with both agencies that not only are they necessary and essential with the delivery of services and programs and outreach have been very valuable, but what needs to be done, continue to be done is the application enhancement and the collaboration, collaboration not only between Mental Health, Social Services, but Mental Health and Social Services with all other agencies throughout the entire City including

the school system. And that's how we get at, you know, the family values, the family issues and things that have already, you know, that we just talked about. Having said all that, and certainly for one since I've on the Council I've been a strong supporter and advocate for the foster care program. I, I believe in it, it's been successful despite this one most recent incident and I've always encouraged that we, we promote it as much as possible so that we can not only educate the community but get more of our citizens, our own citizens involved in participating and become participants in the foster care program. And I, and I still strongly support it. The recommendations that are before us that we've, we've just reviewed certainly have a lot of substance to them and, and will be, I will be supporting, supporting the recommendations, and I, I believe that this Council will, will do so likewise. The question I have, however, and I don't mean to belittle it in any way, it's, it's entitled, New Safeguards to Protect our Children, and that's great but I hope, the, the statement I want to make is that I hope not only for the foster care program or child services program but for all programs, whatever City agencies or department, that there's always a constant review, a constant check, upgrades, modifications, to make sure that these programs are successful, that they're, that they're working, that there, with this new technology, new methods, new legislation, whatever, that we're, we're abiding by because I don't know when the last time substantive changes or recommendations or reviews were done with regards to our own programs, foster care particularly, but sometimes we as human beings, and that's government, and those of us in private sector, we become too complacent. We, just because things are moving along very smoothly we, we tend to believe that all is well. The most recent unfortunate incident this week in our own country is a good example of that. And all of a sudden now we start raising questions, you know, everybody wants to now do something different. The question, it's not even a question, the statement I am making is that I hope that this is only a beginning in terms of looking at all that we do, how we do it, so that we can constantly be upgrading and changing and enhancing programs and, and policies and procedures so that it doesn't take an unfortunate incident to cause us just to take a step back, take a pause to look at something.

Mayor: Mr. Speck.

Speck: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I mean one thing I, I want to say is, is that I, I feel good about the last hour or so in the dialogue that's taken place and the presentation that you made, Meg, in that it, it is really focusing on what we want to do to make a good system even better. Changes that are important to reflect both our community needs and, and other circumstances that we want to be certain are addressed in, in our own systems. The, one of the

unfortunate things about public service and, and, and we've talked about this before, and when we talk about things like, you know, the water coming out of the faucet when you turn it on is that, that unfortunately sometimes you only get attention when it's bad news. You know, when, when something's gone wrong then people focus on it and, and there's not a lot of attention being given to sort of what you do day by day, but that's, I guess, the nature of the way things sometimes work. I think some of you know that I have a connection to the department of some long standing and, and as well as my daughter who works as a social worker in, in New York and, and works, has worked primarily with foster care so there are some things I understand better than others and there's a lot that I've learned just over the last few months. As I said, I probably learned more than I ever expected to about how systems are delivered. One of the things that I think is unfortunate about, just sort of the nature of our whole society, is that when there are problems or, or things that occur that are not what we expected or wanted, we tend to want it explained in, in very simple terms, paragraphs or less, and tell us who to blame. And, and I say that without any disparaging of, of the media. I mean I know that there are some that are critical of some of the articles and, you know, we can always look at it and say I wish that it, the tone of it had been different or something, but the fact is that, that we all demand this. We demand to, to take very complicated problems and explain them in, in a sentence or two and, and I don't think I need anyone here, anyone here that these things aren't very easily explained in a sentence or two. I, for you all that are in the department, I, I'm sitting here thinking that as, as bad as it, as it was in terms of, of the attention that was given to you, I suspect that probably you're being much harder on yourselves than any of the external pieces of information because this is what you do. I mean this is, these are your jobs, your careers and, and you're, you're dedicating yourselves to trying to do things that most of the rest of us don't see very often. And I feel badly for, for you for that. And I know how much you all are, are trying to, trying to rectify that. Obviously the system failed. I mean you can't, you can't say otherwise because our system is designed for something like this not to happen. Not because somebody went out to do it wrong. If, if there were mistakes that were made, we'll remedy them. I think we can look back and say probably it could have been handled a lot better but that's hard for me to understand because I personally have never made a mistake or ever said anything that I wish I could have said differently at some other point. But, I think we are, we really were harder on ourselves in some ways than maybe we should be. We know that this tragedy in theory could have been avoided but it wasn't and everything that we're talking about this morning and, and that you all have been working on is an effort to try to make sure it doesn't happen again. But, look, for everybody, there's no system that

involves people that can't be done better, faster, longer, sooner, you know that, and we want to make sure this doesn't happen again. The tough thing is that as much as you try to remedy whatever failures there were to make sure this doesn't happen again, it still might, with some other nuance or complication that no one had ever thought of and that's why I think that some of the things that we are putting in place really are going to be so helpful to all of us because they involve more people, they, they involve more opportunities for us to be sort of checking what we're doing and making sure it's done better but if something is done, it happens that the system fails again, then we'll, we'll go right back and try to make it even better. And that's the nature of the complexities of our lives, not because we've done a bad job necessarily but because something happened that we didn't think was going to happen and I, those comments I would have made before Tuesday, and I think I did. This is so hard. Because everybody's expecting it to be solved. But I just, you know, and I think this is probably that all of us share and maybe it's just like Phil, you said yesterday when sometimes we forget to say it enough because it's something that we just, is part of our system about how proud we are to be Americans. I just, you know, want to say to all of you that, that dedicate your lives to this, I am proud of you. I haven't for an instant lost confidence in, in your work and we'll, we'll make sure that we make it even better. And I'm proud of you too, Phil. This has been real tough for you, and I know how much you, you feel what's happened and internalize it. But not for an instant have I lost confidence in you either. And we'll go on and, and make this system be even better than it is, and it's been a pretty good one so far and I think we had a good session today. Thanks.

O'Regan: Thank you, Mr. Speck.

Mayor: All right. I think we've had a good session as well, and, and I, if there's one thing I think you can take from all of the comments from, from the Council is that we are supportive of these changes and supportive of you and, and your efforts to make these changes because we want to strengthen the system. We, you know, yeah, the system failed and we are profoundly sorry about that, and I think I speak for not only the Members of the Council and, and the City Manager but your department as well. We are profoundly sorry that that happened but there isn't anything we can do but to try to pick up the pieces and make it stronger. And, and I think in order for that to happen, you, Meg, and the people who, in your department, and you, Phil, need our support. And, and whether it's financial as, as Ms. Woodson pointed out or whether it is new ideas that, that Ms. Eberwein pointed out or suggestions that any of us have made. We need to make it stronger and that's where we need to take this now. There are other

chapters of this and we're not going to be able to rewrite what's happened, but what we can do is work to make this system stronger not only for this City, most importantly for the children who are engaged in this, in this system as well. Because we're dealing with human beings. We are human ourselves. We make mistakes and the people we're working with, the families we're working with, they are human as well and it's that human element, that human frailty and, and fallibility that, that's what we need to, to work on and, and both internally within our departments but also with the people we serve, and that's the most important aspect. But you do deserve our support. The City Manager deserves our support, and by God we're going to give it to you. We have a motion and a second. Is there any further discussion? All those in favor say aye; those opposed. It passes unanimously. Thank you, Council. Good, good session. Thank you, Meg. Thank you Phil. Item 18.

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