

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 23, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO# 39: VOCATIONAL SERVICES FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES (COUNCILMAN SPECK'S REQUEST)

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This memo is in response to Councilman Speck's request at the April 8, 2002, Public Hearing for information regarding the availability of vocational services for high school graduates who have mental retardation or developmental disabilities.

Each year individuals with mental retardation or developmental disabilities graduate from high school special education programs at T.C. Williams and private schools in the area. These individuals need an array of services to retain and apply skills learned in school and achieve optimum levels of independence. The Alexandria Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse (MH/MR/SA) assesses the individuals and places them in a variety of day support and vocational programs, usually with contract providers, and provides ongoing case management services. In FY 2001, there were seven graduates needing services ranging from vocational assessments to long term job coaching and case management services. One of the seven individuals received initial services but did not follow through with continuing services. The remaining six individuals are still receiving services.

Historically, specific funding for the services to these consumers has not been included in the budget for MH/MR/SA. As a result, the Alexandria Community Services Board has been forced to fund these services in a variety of ways, including by reallocating funds from other areas. However, it has become very difficult to absorb new consumers with existing funding, especially since the numbers of consumers no longer needing services has decreased.

Vocational/day services, which provide paid employment, therapeutic intervention and training, is a critical need for these recent graduates. Without ongoing support and opportunities to apply training received in school and to receive additional training, these students are at risk of serious regression that could later require more intensive training and therapeutic intervention. In addition, for individuals residing with family members, vocational/day services help to provide families with the necessary support to maintain the individual with a disability at home.

Staff anticipate that six individuals graduating from high school in Alexandria this year will need vocational services at an annual cost of approximately \$56,000. These individuals will also need case management services, which the Department of MH/MR/SA can provide using existing staff resources. In addition, some of these individuals will need residential services, which MH/MR/SA will attempt to provide using existing residential facilities and resources. In order to remain within established guidelines for the FY 2003 Proposed Budget, MH/MR/SA could not build funding into their budget request to support vocational services needed for the six individuals who will be graduating in FY 2003 and stay within budget guidelines.

Most neighboring jurisdictions do provide specific funding for these consumers. Arlington County has a standing policy of including funding in the base proposed budget each year for services for high school graduates with mental retardation or developmental disabilities. The FY 2003 Proposed Budget for Arlington includes \$168,000 in new funds to cover vocational and case management services for 10 new Arlington Public Schools graduates.

Fairfax County has about 100 individuals with mental retardation or development disabilities graduating from high school each year. The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board submits a request for supplemental funding each year to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to provide vocational, day support, transportation and case management services to these consumers. For FY 2003, the CSB is requesting \$1.4 million and a case management position for an anticipated 94 graduates.

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors has included \$136,000 in FY 2003 for vocational and case management services for the seven individuals expected to graduate this year, and is considering approval of five-year funding for special education graduates with mental retardation. The out-year funding would provide services for 60 additional students in FY 2004-FY 2008 at a cost of \$17,000 per student.

Loudoun County has not yet identified funding for services for the six high school students graduating this year.

Staff: William Claiborn, Director, MHMRSA  
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