


## City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 4, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR GRANT SUBMISSION TO THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION COALITION OF ALEXANDRIA

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**ISSUE:** Authorization for grant submission to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on behalf of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) to strengthen the Coalition's efforts in youth substance abuse prevention.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the City Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse to submit a grant application (due March 21, 2008 to the federal Department of Health and Human Services on behalf of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria, and if awarded, accept up to \$125,000 annually for five-year beginning on October 1, 2008; and
- (2) Authorize the addition of a full-time Administrative Officer II (1.0 FTE) to the Substance Abuse Prevention Team in the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse.

**BACKGROUND:** The focus of this grant is to reduce use of alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use by the youth of Alexandria. The 2007 Developmental Assets survey of Alexandria City Public Schools 7th - 12th graders noted the following:

- Twenty-seven percent of 7th graders reported drinking alcohol in the previous 30 days and 10% of them engaged in binge drinking;
- Sixty-one percent of 12th graders reported drinking alcohol in the previous 30 days and 25% of them engaged in binge drinking;
- Youth alcohol use in Alexandria increases with parental approval, which increases with age;
- Up to 26% of high school students reported using marijuana in the previous 30 days;
- Up to 20% of high school students reported smoking cigarettes in the previous 30 days ; and
- It is during the middle school years when most youth report first using alcohol, marijuana and tobacco.

Research indicates that effective community coalitions can reduce youth substance use, and subsequent adult substance abuse over time. In recognition of this, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) of which Mayor Euille is the honorary chair, was created by and is part of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria. SAPCA recognizes that substance abuse prevention must be addressed comprehensively, through multiple strategies, and across multiple sectors – public, private and faith-based. The mission of SAPCA is to engage diverse sectors of the Alexandria community in comprehensive youth substance abuse prevention activities that result in a reduction of underage substance use and abuse in the City.

The first year of the grant will be spent completing a comprehensive community assessment that will make it possible for the coalition to identify youth alcohol tobacco and marijuana use risk factors unique to Alexandria. The Coalition will target interventions accordingly. Community-wide efforts will include a variety of social marketing campaigns and enforcement strategies. All strategies undertaken will be agreed upon by the Coalition membership, including parents, students, faith communities, local non-profits, local media, Inova Alexandria Hospital, the Health Department, Police Department, Office of the Sheriff, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Court Services Unit, Office on Women and the Department of Human Services.

The Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) current capacity to address substance abuse is extremely limited. The funding requested will support the building of an effective coalition whose efforts will result in lasting community change. The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse will act as fiscal agent for this grant.

**DISCUSSION:** The federal Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is offering five-year Drug Free Communities grants of up to \$125,000 per year, for five years, to viable substance abuse prevention coalitions in order to achieve two major goals:

- Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private nonprofit agencies, and Federal, State, local and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth, and
- Reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize risk of substance abuse.

The grant will provide funding for a full-time coordinator for SAPCA, contracted administrative support, contracted evaluation, and various operating expenses. The coordinator is responsible for organizing the work of SAPCA, which includes strengthening membership, seeking ongoing non-federal funding, facilitating an ongoing community assessment process, and coordinating the implementation of comprehensive substance abuse prevention activities. The coordinator will also manage sustainability efforts and ongoing evaluation of SAPCA. The evaluator will be responsible for establishing and facilitating SAPCA's evaluation plan.

SAPCA's current capacity is limited and does not allow for the development of community-wide comprehensive and successful substance abuse prevention efforts. This funding would make it possible for the coalition to facilitate these efforts, resulting in a City where youth involvement in substance abuse and its related problems can be reduced.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The grant proposal is for a total of \$625,000 over a five-year period. The grant requires a 100% in-kind match, which will be provided through volunteer hours, media donations, supervision by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse, and office space. As personnel costs increase, there will be a corresponding decrease in operating expenses to ensure the grant is self-supported. After the initial five-year period, the Coalition may reapply for a second five-year period. In the event new funding is not secured after the initial five-year period, the position and related expenses would be eliminated if funding external to the City is not secured.

**STAFF:**

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