


City of Alexandria, Virginia

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3-25-08

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 14, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR GRANT APPLICATION SUBMISSION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, FOR THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE AND AWARENESS (SARA), PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

ISSUE: Authorization for grant application submission to the Virginia Department of Health, for the Office on Women's Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA), Prevention and Education Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize:

- (1) The submission of the grant application (due March 31, 2008), not to exceed \$90,000 over a three year period, and to begin May 1, 2008; and
- (2) The creation of one part-time position for a Bilingual Outreach Prevention Specialist, whose hours will be reduced or the position will be eliminated, if the grant funds are diminished or the program is no longer funded; and
- (3) The City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: These grant funds are made available through the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which allocates funds to jurisdictions through the Virginia Department of Health. The funds were set-aside to develop specific programs addressing prevention and education efforts to reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

These funds have become available outside the normal funding process. The Virginia Department of Health notified the Office on Women on February 27 that these monies recently became available due to a de-allocation of funds from another grantee.

The Office on Women presently employs two Sexual Assault Outreach Prevention Specialists. The only bilingual specialist is limited by the grant which funds the position to provide services to adult survivors and provide court accompaniment in pre-trial, sexual assault criminal cases only. The second specialist's primary duties are to educate students regarding sexual assault

prevention through the “Expect Respect” program. This program is not available in Spanish nor does not offer specific cultural needs of the Latino adolescents. This proposal would use the “Unequal Partners” curriculum, developed by Planned Parenthood, and can be adapted specifically for use in Latino communities.

The need for a bilingual outreach specialist is not only to provide services to Latino youth who may or may not have challenges with English, but also to provide a comfort level of having an instructor talk to them in their native language. One of the most important aspects of the program is to have an instructor who is Hispanic, or who is specially trained to understand and address the nuances of the Hispanic culture. This includes but is not limited to: family dynamics, religion, marriage, issues, machismo etc., and how that directly affects their views on sex and sexual violence.

If grant funds are reduced during the term of the grant, the hours of the Prevention Specialist would also be reduced. If funds are no longer available, volunteers who will be trained as proxies, would be able to assist with the program on a limited basis.

DISCUSSION: Almost half of the rapes in the United States are committed against victims under the age of 17 and 80% of all sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. Many adolescent rape survivors experience considerable trauma that often continue into their adult years, if it remains unaddressed. This includes depression, poor performance scholastically, and feelings of helplessness, which can lead to eating disorders and inappropriate relationships throughout adulthood.

Over 25% of the students in the Alexandria school system are Latino. According to data provided by the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP) and the Virginia Department of Health, pregnancy rates showed an upward trend among 15-19 year old Latina adolescents. National statistics report that very often, these young women are coerced into relationships with men twice their age. Although the majority of these relationships are not reported as abuse, many cases constitute statutory rape.

This program could provide sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention education to 1,500 middle and high school age Hispanic youth in Alexandria, with an emphasis on avoiding coercive relationships. Sexual violence prevention education will be offered in the schools, and also in other venues throughout the City including community youth groups, recreation centers and faith based youth groups in the community.

FISCAL IMPACT: The funds are available beginning May 1, 2008. Due to timing, the initial grant period will cover six months. Funds will be used for a 24-hour part-time position (\$14,700) and non-personnel costs (\$3,300) associated with the start-up of the program. The second and third renewal years have a maximum of \$36,000 per year (\$29,401 for a part-time position and \$6,599 for non-personnel costs), to continue the program on the federal fiscal year. No matching funds are required.

The City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency, the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department. It should be noted that there are no monies available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended. The grant-funded positions would terminate upon the expiration of the grant, and the individuals who fill the positions would be notified of this condition of employment.

STAFF:

Lisa Baker, Director, Office on Women

Claire Dunn, Coordinator, Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Programs, Office on Women

Elisabeth Wheel, Budget Analyst, OMB

Karen Winey, Grants Coordinator, City Manager's Office