

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 17, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES TO IMPLEMENT A CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM WITHIN THE ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application from the Alexandria Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse (MH/MR/SA) to the State Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to establish a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program within the Alexandria Police Department.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Authorize MH/MR/SA to submit a grant application for \$39,400 to the DCJS for the creation of a CIT program within the Alexandria Police Department; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: Significant progress has been made in the City's efforts to divert persons with serious mental illness away from the criminal justice system and into the mental health treatment system. Due in part to ongoing grant funding of \$242,000 from the State Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS), MH/MR/SA has developed a number of new programs and services in collaboration with other agencies and departments that are helping serious mentally ill persons lead law-abiding and productive lives.

The key element lacking in Alexandria's Mental Health Jail Diversion efforts is a Crisis Intervention Team. Crisis Intervention Teams can be found in police departments around the country and have been proven to dramatically improve outcomes in police interactions with persons with mental illness. Effective CIT programs decrease the arrest rate and reported injuries among persons with mental illness, increase referrals of mentally ill persons into the treatment system, and show a decrease in the rate of officer injury during events. CIT programs

provide intensive training to patrol officers in how to effectively intervene with mentally ill persons and how to navigate the mental health treatment system.

MH/MR/SA and the Alexandria Police Department (APD) have been collaborating on the development of a CIT program for six months. The goal is to create a team of 20 CIT-trained officers in FY2010, thus allowing for three CIT officers on-duty at all times in the City. 911 dispatchers will also be trained in how to screen/de-escalate callers and to know when to dispatch a CIT officer.

Funding will be requested for the following purposes:

- Training a group of five staff from MH/MR/SA and the APD in a CIT “train the trainer” course.
- Consultant fees, supplies, meals, etc. needed to conduct four, 40-hour CIT classes in Alexandria during FY2010. Five APD officers will attend each class, as well as staff from the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office.
- Conference registration, travel, and lodging fees for five City staff to attend the National CIT conference.
- Design and printing fees for educational/promotional materials to be used by CIT officers to help educate the community.

The Alexandria Community Services Board approved the grant application at its April 2, 2009 meeting. This grant required potential applicants to submit concept papers in advance of being eligible to apply. The department learned its concept paper was approved on April 2, 2009. The grant application is due April 30, 2009.

FISCAL IMPACT: The grant proposal is for \$39,400 and no City match is required.

If the grant is awarded on an ongoing basis, it is unlikely that the grant amount will increase in future years. In that case, portions of the program would be reduced to match the available state grant award. The Department does not intend to seek any City funds for this initiative. If funding is eliminated, other non-City sources of funding will be pursued.

STAFF:

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