


*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES FOR SERVING SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of grant application in the amount of \$49,218 to the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), to provide training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit the grant application to DCJS for a two-year period in the amount of \$49,218; and
- (2) Execute all documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** Alexandria is home to many people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their status. The Alexandria Gay and Lesbian Community Association is an organization with over 300 members.

Research estimates that 25% to 33% of LGBTQ relationships are likely to be abusive, which is the same percentage as in heterosexual relationships. Abusive LGBTQ relationships have the same dynamics of power and control as abusive heterosexual relationships, but more frequently they go undetected and unreported. Attitudes like "women don't hurt each other" or "a fight between two men is a fair fight" can keep people from recognizing abuse. Further, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning are just as likely as people who identify as heterosexual to experience sexual violence from a family member, acquaintance, partner or stranger. A survivor may be afraid to get help because they may be worried that service providers will be insensitive.

With the goal of addressing these concerns, the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program (DVP), and Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program, of the Office on Women applied for and received funding from DCJS in calendar years 2007 and 2008, to expand efforts to improve services and outreach to survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. A LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board made up of committed community

members was established to accomplish this work so that LGBTQ survivors receive informed and respectful treatment and feel more comfortable reaching out for services.

Staff believe that the project has been successful so far. Policies, practices, and outreach materials within SARA and DVP have been scrutinized, and changes have been made to create a more welcoming environment. Staff and allied professionals have been trained, and outreach has been conducted in the community, but the members of the LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board feel that the work has just begun.

As a result of the success of this original one-time project, the LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board requested the Office on Women to submit another two-year application to focus efforts on institutionalizing training, and to heightened awareness of the particular concerns a survivor who identifies as LGBTQ may face, through additional allied professional training. Without an additional application, the accomplishment of the past two years would dissolve when the grant period ends on December 31, 2008.

Staff and allied professionals have been very responsive to the training, but there is currently no mechanism in place to assure that new staff will receive the same important training or that more in-depth training will be available. The ultimate goal with the new grant is to sustain the program through institutionalized training.

**DISCUSSION:** The Alexandria Office on Women's sexual and domestic violence programs are seeking funds for a part-time Health and Community Education Specialist (HCS) for a two-year project to institutionalize training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning or queer (LGBTQ). The grant application is due on September 12, 2008. This program, with the guidance of the LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board, which now consists of ten active members from the Alexandria community, will 1) expand training for allied professionals working with LGBT survivors and conduct "train the trainer" workshops; and 2) work with allied professionals to institutionalize LGBTQ training for all people who may work with a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender survivor of abuse. This second and final proposal will also allow us to create departmental directives. The LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board is currently exploring the possibility of incorporating LGBTQ sexual and domestic violence training into the new recruit training of the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy.

**GRANT PERIOD:** January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2010.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Application for grant funds totaling up to \$49,218 for the two-year program (\$24,609 in 2009 and \$24,609 in 2010). No City match is required. The program will end in two years and no additional City funds have been committed to continue the program.

**STAFF:**

Lisa Baker, Director Office on Women

Claire Dunn, Domestic Violence Program and Sexual Assault Response and Awareness Program Coordinator

Karen Winey, Grants Coordinator