

EXHIBIT NO. 1

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10-28-08

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

### MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 22, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AN APPLICATION FROM THE COURT SERVICE UNIT FOR GRANT FUNDS TO PROVIDE PARENTING SKILLS EDUCATION FOR MINORITY AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of an application from the Court Service Unit for grant funds to provide parenting skills education for minority and immigrant families involved in the juvenile justice system.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of a grant application to the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (due November 1, 2008), not to exceed \$20,000; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents for the grant, which would be effective on January 1, 2009.

**BACKGROUND:**

In FY 2001, the Court Service Unit began providing a six-week parent education program, both in English and in Spanish, to court-involved youth and their parents, utilizing a nationally recognized best-practice curriculum called, "Parenting with Love and Limits." The parent education proved to be very effective in reducing recidivism with court-involved youth. Court Service statistics show that 82 percent of Alexandria's youth participants have had no new arrests within one year of program completion, and 91 percent of the parent participants highly approved of the program. The Savannah Family Institute, which developed the "Parenting with Love and Limits" curriculum, recently instituted a \$28,000 annual licensing fee for use of the program. The Court Service Unit lacks the funds to support this ongoing expenditure and seeks to replace this program, through the application for grant funds to develop a new parental education program.

Grant funds are provided under the Virginia Juvenile Justice Crime Control Act (VJCCCA), administered by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), to support the Court Service Unit's community-based programs and the City's Shelter Care program. On October 8, 2008, DJJ announced the availability of one-time special funds to augment and support current VJCCCA-funded programs. This opens a funding opportunity, which the Court Service Unit wishes to pursue, to use VJCCCA grant funds to develop a new parental education program that will replace "Parenting With Love and Limits."

## **DISCUSSION:**

Studies show the importance of parental involvement in his/her child's life to help improve delinquent and other problem behavior in the community. The Court Service Unit wants to focus on building parental skills and involvement by initiating a two-tier parenting program that will offer parenting education as the first tier, and Family Group Conferencing as the second tier, for more difficult cases. Two best-practice programs have been identified to implement this initiative.

Parenting Education: The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Department of Justice) highlights parenting courses developed by the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC) as model programming. CICC offers culture-specific training and curricula for African American and Latino populations, as well as generalized training for persons from other cultures. The programs have been proven to reduce risk factors that lead to delinquent behavior and increase factors that prevent delinquency. CICC's "Effective Black Parenting Program" is the country's first culturally-adapted parenting skill-building program for parents of African-American children. It is a 15-week program designed to combat child abuse, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, gang violence, learning disorders, behavior problems, and emotional disturbances. A comparable program for Latino families, "Los Ninos Bien Educados," builds similar skills for Latino parents. "Confident Parenting" is a generalized parenting training appropriate for both small and large-group settings.

Family Group Conferencing. Also known as family group decision-making, this is a family focused strategy that brings together youth offenders and their families, victims, law enforcement officials, service providers and other community members in a non-adversarial, community-based decision-making process. The strategy's primary goals are to hold the youth accountable for his or her offense, and to create a mutually agreed upon plan to repair the harm done to the victim and the community at large. The Alexandria Department of Human Services uses this model and has had much success with difficult cases of child abuse and neglect.

Recent research indicates that there are more than 800 family group conferencing programs being implemented within restorative justice settings throughout the nation. These programs overwhelmingly report high levels of victim satisfaction with the process and low levels of recidivism by offenders.

It is anticipated that this initiative will serve up to 60 children and families annually and offer a continuum of services, based on youth and family need. The program will consist of a 15-week parent skill-building program that is court-ordered to all families. Family Group Conferencing will be available to families and children that have issues which cannot be adequately addressed in the parenting classes.

The City's Court Service Unit would like to apply for \$20,000 in VJCCCA grant funds to provide the parenting education and family group conferencing programs. The funds would be used for training and travel for up to 10 court therapists, probation officers and caseworkers, and for purchasing the program curricula.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Grant funding of up to \$20,000 will need to be expended between January 1 and June 30, 2009. No matching funds are required.

**STAFF:**

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