


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 30, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: GRANT APPLICATION TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) TO EXPAND THE FAMILY DRUG TREATMENT COURT

ISSUE: Grant application to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to expand the City's Family Drug Treatment Court program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit the grant application (due April 27, 2010), and if awarded, accept up to \$350,000 over a three-year period from the United States Department of Justice for an expansion to the City's Drug Court. The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse (MH/MR/SA) will serve as the fiscal agent for administering the grant;
- (2) Affirm that there are no funds available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended; and
- (3) Execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse (MH/MR/SA) proposes an expansion of Drug Court, a collaborative effort with the Alexandria Department of Human Services, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, 18th Judicial District, Alexandria Public School System, Alexandria Community Services Board, City Attorney's Office, and the Office on Women. These City partners developed Drug Court in 2001 in response to an alarming growth in the number of abused and neglected children of substance abusing parents. These parents are court-ordered to participate in a structured 5-phase program that lasts 15-18 months depending on the progress of each participant. The hallmarks of Drug Court are increased accountability, easy access to treatment services, intensive care coordination, and individualized treatment for the child and family. Drug Court capacity is 15 parents and their children, often numbering more than 40. Children and parents receive treatment through MH/MR/SA. Current waitlists in the CSB adult and children's programs, however, prohibit Drug Court's ability to meet the mental health and substance abuse needs of Drug Court families. Grant funds will allow MH/MR/SA to provide targeted and coordinated services to Drug Court parents and their children.

DISCUSSION: Drug Court is an effective program, as during Fiscal Year 2009, 19 parents and 44 children received services through Drug Court. Of these, 57% successfully completed the program, and 77% of the children were either living at home or with relatives at the time of program completion. Only three children remained in foster care at the time of program completion. This is a program that requires additional family-centered services. Federal funds will allow for significantly more services provided to these children and families in order to have positive outcomes and healthier lives.

If awarded, these funds will support the hiring of a full-time licensed mental health and substance abuse professional (Therapist III). The Supreme Court of Virginia's Drug Court Office will conduct, free of charge, an extensive outcome evaluation analysis.

If approved by Council and if awarded by OJJDP, funding would begin in the fall of 2010 and continue for a three-year period. MH/MR/SA plans to pursue revenues from third party payers to support the Therapist III. If this position cannot be self-supporting when the grant funding ends, MH/MR/SA will either scale back the hours to a point that can be self-sustaining or eliminate the expansion to ensure no additional General Fund support is needed. If this grant is awarded, MH/MR/SA will request that one of its seven frozen positions be unfrozen and reclassified to a Therapist III classification. The position will be refrozen if ongoing revenues cannot support the expansion.

The Alexandria Community Services Board is scheduled to review this grant opportunity at its April 15, 2010, meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: This grant application will not affect City General Fund support for MH/MR/SA. The grant may provide up to \$350,000 during a three-year period. An in-kind contribution will constitute the 25% match requirement.

STAFF:

L. Michael Gilmore, Ph.D., Director, MH/MR/SA
Deborah Warren, DCSW, Director of Child, Family & Prevention Services, MH/MR/SA
Jim Fleming, Fiscal Officer III, MH/MR/SA
Kendel Taylor, Senior Budget Analyst, Office of Management and Budget