

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 22, 2012

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** GRANT APPLICATION TO VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY YOUTH

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a grant application to be submitted by the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) in response to the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) Request for Proposal to fund Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT) grants.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application (due March 27); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** On January 19, 2011, the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) released a new Healthy Communities Action Teams (HCAT) Request for Proposal (RFP) for two-year grants to fund community coalitions to prevent and fight childhood obesity in Virginia localities. Funding and training provided by VFHY through its HCAT grants allow community organizations to implement identified promising practices in childhood-obesity prevention suggested by the national Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The grants are for up to \$80,000 over two years.

The RFP is in direct alignment with the goals of the *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria's* Childhood Obesity Action Network (COAN). COAN is a community coalition whose partners include local foundations, Alexandria/Arlington Smart Beginnings, health professionals, city agencies, childcare providers, community and faith organizations, businesses, and engaged residents. Since February 2009, COAN (formerly the ACHIEVE Planning Team) has worked to build awareness among a broad base of partners and community leaders on the obesity rates in Alexandria. Over 40% of Alexandria children, ages two to five, are overweight or obese.

COAN's key initiatives and goals have included:

- **Project Play** – To ensure that every child has access to a quality playground by improving the play environment and raising awareness about the importance of play.

- Preschool Health Network – To collaborate with Alexandria preschools, family day care providers, and playgroups to explore how to create healthier preschool environments and pilot two health-oriented programs, including Color Me Healthy and Active Play.
- Markets for Everyone – To increase access to healthy food, by piloting a SNAP/Double Dollar program at the Four Mile Run Farmers Market to allow residents to use their food stamps to purchase fresh food at the market.
- Gardening in the Community – To expand access to healthy food by building community partners' capacity to start and manage gardens for their clients or residents, and provide gardening, cooking, and nutrition programming.
- Healthy Food System – To increase access to healthy food by exploring methods to expand the capacity of the local food system to procure and distribute healthy foods within Alexandria.
- Breastfeeding Promotion – To encourage breastfeeding-friendly practices and to work with service providers to develop common messages for new and expecting mothers about breastfeeding.

**DISCUSSION:** The Alexandria Childhood Obesity Action Network (COAN) has been working to build a broad holistic approach to prevent childhood obesity as discussed above. COAN has over 100 volunteers and partners engaged in its initiatives, but additional outside funding is critical to its continued success. Over the last two years, COAN has been able to leverage its initial National Association of City and County Health Officials / Center for Disease Control and Prevention (NACCHO/CDC) funding of \$40,000 to raise an additional \$102,967 in grant funding to support key initiatives; this does not include all the additional in-kind time and resources that volunteers and community partners have devoted towards COAN initiatives.

The VFHY RFP represents a strategic opportunity to secure additional funding for the coalition to continue its obesity prevention efforts in collaboration with the Alexandria Health Department. With Council's approval AHD Health and COAN will apply for \$80,000 over two years. If the application is successful the funding will be used to support a part-time (approximately 15 hours/ week) COAN Coordinator supervised within Alexandria Health Department; the balance of the funding will be used toward operational expenses and COAN initiatives. It is understood that City funding will not be available to maintain the part-time position at the end of the grant cycle.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** If awarded, the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) will receive \$80,000 over two years to support COAN's obesity prevention work in breastfeeding, food accessibility, preschool education, and playgrounds. AHD will serve as the fiscal agent for all funds received. Grant funding is on a reimbursable basis and requires no City matching funds.

**STAFF:**

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