


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 3, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR A ONE-TIME BLOCK GRANT AWARD BY THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TO UPGRADE THE COMPUTER SOFTWARE FOR THE CITY'S METHADONE PROGRAM

ISSUE: Consideration of application to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) for a one-time Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant award to upgrade the Opioid Treatment Program's existing Netsmart Technologies Methadone dispensing software system.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of a grant application, not to exceed \$25,000; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents that may be required.

DISCUSSION: On March 28, 2011, the State Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, James W. Stewart, III announced the availability of one-time federal substance abuse block grant funds. In order to implement a fair method of allocating the unspent funds, DBHDS announced that "eligible non-profit mental health and substance abuse organizations may apply to DBHDS" at any time during or after the second quarter of the state fiscal year. While there is no specific due date for applications, funding is limited and must be expended by September 30, 2011.

The highest priority one-time substance abuse need within the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) is the upgrading of the existing methadone dispensing software system in the Alexandria Opioid Treatment Program (OTP), which provides methadone as an opioid replacement to approximately 86 individuals annually who have addictions to heroin, prescription medications and other opioids. Opioid replacement therapy is an evidence-based treatment known to reduce illegal drug use, drug trafficking, transmission of communicable disease and crime associated with addiction to opioids.

Most patients are required to come to the clinic daily to receive their methadone. In order to improve community and patient safety, the OTP moved from administering the tablet form of methadone to liquid dispensing in September 2001. The delivery of the liquid dose is automated using the Netsmart Technologies software where patient information on dosage, medical history and identifying information is stored. This method of dispensing reduces the chances of dosing error by allowing the physician to input orders directly into the database and the software then commands an automated pump to dispense the prescribed dose as each patient presents at the nursing station. In addition, liquid methadone has less of a chance of being tampered with or sold on the streets illegally. The software also maintains automated inventory as required by the State Methadone Authority and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The current Netsmart software is a ten year-old product; the upgrade would enhance functionality with a new operating platform to improve the retention and management of data and provide enhanced functionality for inventory management, client enrollment and tracking, medication orders and dispensing, care plan activity, counseling with treatment plans and progress notes, and self-pay billing and accounts receivable.

Implementation of the upgrade to Avatar Addiction Management (AM) software will:

- Improve the efficiency of the clinic;
- Allow staff to meet deadlines and targets for reporting, treatment plans, and doctors' orders easily and quickly;
- Assist in providing individualized care and care plans to patients; and
- Make patient charts and documents available at any time to authorized staff members.

The Avatar AM software automates the tasks associated with Methadone inventory management, reception, distribution, and reporting. Doing so saves and/or generates funds by making staff more effective in a number of ways:

- Tracking and reporting on Methadone inventory and dispensed Methadone;
- When coupled with a computer-controlled pump, dispensing liquid Methadone with Avatar's Clinic Management Software enables one person to provide up to 100 doses per hour;
- Record keeping and reporting are completely automated – DEA and state agency mandated information can be printed at the press of a single button;
- Inventory is automatically tracked and used on a first in / first out basis;
- While some printed records and charts are required, all of the information, tests, laboratory results, patient surveys, prescriptions, charts, documents, counseling records, and dispensing information is kept in each patient's electronic folder, which can be accessed at any time in part or in whole by any staff member authorized to do so;

- Laboratory test results may be imported directly from the testing facility, saving time and potential data entry errors.

Periodic upgrades to the software system are necessary and expected in order to keep pace with current technologies and advancements and are required for the continued operation of the OTP. The upgraded Netsmart software has been available for several years, but budget reductions have prevented the DCHS from funding this upgrade.

The Alexandria Community Services Board will review the grant application request at its May 11, 2011 meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: The maximum grant available is \$25,000 and is a one-time award. No City match is required. The \$25,000 would fully fund the equipment, software, training and implementation costs of Netsmart. The only cost to the City's Department of Community and Human Services would be travel costs for Netsmart representatives to be on site for conversion, which is estimated at \$1,800. Existing funds will be reallocated to pay for these travel expenses.

STAFF:

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