

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2010

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

ISSUE: City Council consideration of grant application in the amount of \$51,480 to the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), to provide training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit the grant application to DCJS in the amount of \$51,480 (Due October 15, 2010); and
- (2) Execute all documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: Alexandria is home to many people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 2.93% of the households in the City of Alexandria are lesbian or gay. Since "household" was used instead of population, the actual percentage of LGBTQ persons in Alexandria is unknown and likely much higher.

Research estimates that 25% to 33% of LGBTQ relationships are 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. Further, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer 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 to their concerns.

To address these concerns, the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program (DVP) and Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program applied for and received funding from DCJS in calendar years 2007 and 2008 to improve services and outreach to survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. A LGBTQ Victim Services Advisory Board comprised of committed community members and City staff was established so LGBTQ survivors receive informed and respectful treatment and feel more comfortable requesting services. The project continued in 2009 and 2010 through funding from the Family and Children's Trust Fund and a Victim Services Stimulus grant administered through DCJS. The Advisory Board renamed itself a Task Force and continues to meet quarterly and advise and contribute to the work.

The project has been successful. Staff scrutinized policies, practices, and outreach materials within SARA and DVP, revised them to be more inclusive, and conducted outreach in the community. More than 1,000 service providers have been trained, most of them City employees, on how to create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ clients. All employees of the Alexandria Police Department, Office of the Sheriff, Department of Human Services, and Office on Women have been trained as well as employees from the Fire Department, Community Services Board, and other City and non-profit agencies. School personnel, including teachers, administrators, nurses, and social workers have been also been trained. The leaders of nearly all of these agencies are incorporating LGBTQ cultural competency training in their departmental new employee curriculum.

Staff collects evaluations at all trainings, and the overwhelming response is positive. In fact, in every training service providers commented on how important the material is, that they have never had access to such training, and this makes them a more competent service provider.

DISCUSSION: The Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs are seeking funds for a part-time Outreach and Prevention Specialist (OPS) for a two-year project to institutionalize training for allied professionals serving sexual and domestic violence survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ). This program, with the guidance of the LGBTQ Victim Services Task Force, which now consists of ten active members from the Alexandria community, will 1) expand training for allied professionals working with LGBTQ survivors and conduct "train the trainer" workshops; and 2) work with allied professionals to make available training available for all people who may work with a LGBTQ survivor of abuse.

GRANT PERIOD: The 24-month grant period is January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012. The grant application is due October 15, 2010.

FISCAL IMPACT: Receipt of up to \$51,480 for the two-year program (\$25,740 in 2011 and \$25,740 in 2012). 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:

Michael Gilmore, Ph.D., Director, Department of Community and Human Services

Deborah Warren, Acting Deputy Director, Center for Children & Families

Erika Callaway Kleiner, LGBTQ Project Coordinator

Claire Dunn, Coordinator, Sexual and Domestic Violence Advocacy Programs

Ryan Touhill, Budget Analyst, Office of Management & Budget