



Legislation Text

File #: 13-1041, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2013

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Authorization To Apply For 2013 AmeriCorps State Grant To Fund A Child Well-Being And Family Support Program At Brent Place.

ISSUE: City Council authorization to apply for an AmeriCorps grant of \$124,794, from the Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) to fund the Department of Community and Human Services' ChildThrive!, a child well-being and family support program to be administered on site at Brent Place. The grant application deadline is March 7, 2013.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council:

- (1) Authorize the submission of an AmeriCorps grant application to request funding for the ChildThrive! Program; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents.

BACKGROUND: An AmeriCorps grant established the ChildThrive! program at Brent Place in 2010. Brent Place is home to approximately 108 families, many of whom are foreign born. The complex is a subsidized 14 story apartment building located at 375 South Reynolds Street in Alexandria. It is comprised of 207 apartments consisting of 50 one bedrooms, 105 two bedrooms and 52 three bedrooms. While up to eleven units may be rented without income limitations, at this time all of the households residing at the property have incomes at or below 60 percent of the area median income, including a large number of households with income far below that range.

Serious issues with violence and crime have plagued Brent Place for years. By providing on site services the quality of life and the living environment has significantly improved, especially for the children and youth. In program year 2010-2011 child protective services referrals fell by 33% and crime dropped by 10%. In program

year 2011-2012 crime decreased 17%; the child protective services statistics are not yet available. In the City's strategic planning process, the need for on-site services, particularly in the West End was emphasized and ChildThrive! partnered with multiple community agencies to provide comprehensive onsite services.

AmeriCorps is a national service network that provides part-time and full-time service opportunities for participants to serve their communities and build the capacity of organizations to meet local needs in the areas of education, healthy futures, disaster service, clean energy/environment, veterans, and economic opportunity. In Virginia, the AmeriCorps State program is administered by OVCS which receives an allocation each year from the Corporation for National and Community Service to provide grants to organizations to operate AmeriCorps programs throughout Virginia.

The period of the initial grant will be for 12 months. Grants may be renewed for up to two additional years. The program is currently completing the third year of a three-year grant.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of ChildThrive! is to enhance the well-being of children and families residing at Brent Place. The program focuses on building and strengthening the existing community and providing a variety of on-site easily accessible decentralized services. ChildThrive! recruited and maintained six AmeriCorps members who assure robust and comprehensive supports and linkages for children and their families. The City of Alexandria's Department of Community and Human Services is committed to cultural diversity and has recruited recent college graduates who best reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the families residing at Brent Place. ChildThrive! recruitment is based on the Teach for America Model, which targets highly accomplished graduates from a variety of disciplines to work in urban and rural low-income communities.

Six AmeriCorps members stationed at Brent Place provide family support, prevention services, recreational and educational services and crisis intervention to strengthen and enhance the Brent Place community. Prior to 2010, programs on-site were limited. With the partnership of existing service providers at Brent Place and community partners ChildThrive! expanded on-site services to include:

- Screening for public assistance benefits
- Parenting and relationship events to strengthen families
- Employment counseling and training
- Domestic violence counseling
- Recreational services for children and families
- Educational support for school aged children and adults
- Citizenship education and assistance

Brent Place management is very supportive of the ChildThrive! project.

FISCAL IMPACT: The grant request is for \$124,794 with a required cash or in-kind match of at least 24%. The proposed in-kind local match will come from: the value of the rents for two apartment units from Homes for America (which owns the building); and the Department of Community and Human Services for associated staff costs, included in the proposed FY 2014 Budget. No new positions will be created by this grant.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Debra R. Collins, Deputy City Manager

Mike Gilmore, Director, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS)

Deborah Warren, Director, Center for Children and Families, DCHS

Jim Fleming, Fiscal Officer III, DCHS

Margaret Dhillon, Supervisor, Child Welfare, DCHS