



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0896, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 3, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Grant Application for the Department of Community and Human Services to be a Direct Services Site for Virginia's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration COVID-19 Emergency Grant as Managed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application for the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) to be a direct services site for Virginia's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) COVID-19 Emergency Grant as managed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Approve a grant application for approximately \$140,000 in funding to be used to provide screening, assessment and treatment for children entering foster care. The exact amount to be determined by DBHDS by June 18, 2020; and
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The DBHDS SAMHSA COVID-19 Emergency Grant would fund up to \$140,000 for 1.0 FTE Senior Therapist to provide evidence based behavioral health screening, assessment and treatment services for children entering foster care and their families, from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Referrals to Child Protective Services are expected to increase because of COVID-19, as are the behavioral health needs of children and families in general. The proposed services are proactive, ensuring early identification that will support children to remain at the lowest level of service and limit use of residential treatment and other out-of-home placements. We estimate serving 40 children in FY21, although we will refine this number prior to grant submission.

DISCUSSION: Early assessment and intervention are critical to the well-being of children and youth entering

foster care-a population with a high prevalence behavioral health needs. Up to 80 percent of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared to approximately 18 to 22 percent of the general population. The American Academy of Pediatrics, Healthy Foster Care American Initiative, identifies mental and behavioral health as, “the greatest unmet health need for children and teens in foster care.” Delivery of timely services can help resolve acute health issues and better manage chronic conditions. Accordingly, child welfare advocates and child health policy makers endorse early health screening and assessment for children and youth following removal from the home. Early screening through this proposal would allow staff to identify needs and access comprehensive diagnostic assessment and treatment. Current DCHS capacity will not meet the needs of these children and families, especially considering the expected pandemic-related increase in children coming into foster care. This proposal will fill the gap.

The grant would be administered within DCHS Center for Children and Families (CCF) Child and Family Behavioral Health Services (CFBHS). CFBHS has a similar established screening, assessment, and treatment model in collaboration with the Center for Alexandria’s Children. The Senior Therapist assigned for that work will be back up the grant-funded Senior Therapist. If CFBHS capacity for treatment is exceeded, children and families will be linked to private services. The proposal is developed in close collaboration with DCHS CCF Child Welfare Services and modeled on a successful effort by Arlington DHS.

The RFP came out on May 8. Eligible applicants are Community Services Boards (CSBs) across the Commonwealth where there is an increased behavioral health need because of COVID-19. The decision to move forward was made May 19 after a period of ascertaining priorities for DCHS/CSB, as well as consultation with DCHS Child Welfare colleagues and Arlington DHS. A Google Docs proposal was due at 5 p.m. on Friday, May 29. It did not require signature. Decisions will be made June 18 with services beginning in July. CFBHS has a structure in place to support this aggressive timeline. As this application was submitted without prior approval from the City Council, it is understood that if Council does not approve, the funds would not be accepted or would be returned.

FISCAL IMPACT: The funding request in this application will total no more than \$140,000. There is no match requirement. Funds will be used primarily to hire 1.0 FTE Bilingual (English/Spanish) Senior Therapist. Third party payments such as Medicaid, CSA and Safe and Stable Funds will be used to support the work of this position in subsequent years if no-cost extensions are not available.

No additional funds are currently available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended.

STAFF:

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