

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 67 : USE OF STIMULUS FUNDING TO PAY FOR THE ELIMINATED SCHOOL SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELORS

This memo is in response to a request from Councilman Krupicka that the City Council be provided information on whether or not money from the federal stimulus legislation could be used to pay for the eliminated school substance abuse counselor positions.

The FY 2010 proposed budget eliminated 2.5 therapist positions within the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse for a total savings of \$187,149. One full-time position (\$77,639) provides early intervention and prevention services to 40 at-risk youth who need supportive counseling at George Washington Middle School. The second full-time position (\$77,639) provides bilingual (Spanish) prevention services to 210 children and 150 parents at Brent Place Apartments and Tucker Elementary School. The third half-time position (\$31,187) also provides bilingual (Spanish) prevention services to 40 children and 60 adults at Patrick Henry Elementary School. Overall, the substance abuse prevention team provides over 20 programs (50% evidence based) that reduce youth high risk behaviors such as participation in violence, use of alcohol and other drugs, pregnancy prevention and dropout from school.

Certain provisions with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (commonly referred to as the stimulus bill) could provide funding to support the therapist positions. However, the Schools have determined that support for substance abuse counselor positions is not in concert with their strategic plan objectives. To ensure the best use of stimulus funds across the school division, the ACPS is aligning anticipated stimulus funding with the school division's goals, as outlined in the School Board's newly adopted strategic plan. Because the stimulus funds are a one-time allocation that will end in FY 2011, the Schools are hesitant to take on new responsibilities with long-term operational costs that have not been previously planned for. By aligning stimulus funds with their strategic plan goals and objectives, the school division will supplement existing programs or fund new programs that have already been designated as long term division-wide goals.