

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

---

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 10, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 94 : PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN MH/MR/SA  
PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

---

As a follow-up to the Budget Public Hearing on March 11, 2009, City Council requested additional information regarding the proposed prevention reductions by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse.

The Proposed FY 2010 Budget includes reductions of \$1.45 million and 14.5 FTEs in the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse. A significant portion of these reductions will occur in Prevention and Early Intervention programs. Most staff members in these programs are split between Prevention and Early Intervention programs, so this memorandum will address both services.

Prevention and Early Intervention services are similar in many respects, but have their differences. Prevention services are aimed at substantially reducing the incidence of mental health, substance use disorders, and intellectual disability. Services involve people, families, communities, and systems working together to promote their strengths and potentials. Emphasis is on enhancement of protective factors and reduction of risk factors.

Early Intervention Services, however, are intended to improve functioning or change behavior in those individuals identified as beginning to experience problems, symptoms, or behaviors that, without intervention, are likely to result in the need for treatment. Services are generally targeted to identified individuals or groups and typical services include individual counseling, case consultation and groups for adolescents who have experimented with or are at risk for use of alcohol tobacco or other drugs, and programs for children or adults exhibiting behavior changes related to family problems, divorce, death of a loved one, acculturation issues and job loss.

MH/MR/SA currently has 12.8 Prevention FTEs and 2.1 Early Intervention FTEs. The FY 2010 Proposed Budget reduces Prevention by 2.75 FTEs and Early Intervention by 0.5 FTEs. The department receives grant revenues from the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation for 1.5 Prevention and Early Intervention FTEs and staff learned late in the process of a 0.5 FTE reduction in the VTSF-funded positions. As a result, Prevention and Early Intervention staffing is projected to decrease by 3.75 FTEs (25%).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The reduction in the VTSF grant was not included in the Proposed Budget due to the timing of the notification.

Prevention and Early Intervention services are valued by the community and consistent with best practice models. Three recent surveys, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the Developmental Assets Survey, and the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (SAPCA)/George Mason University Qualitative Assess of Youth Substance Use in Alexandria all indicated a need for increased substance abuse prevention services. Specific needs related to an explicit need to increase children's capacity to resist peer pressure, increase parents' skills, and strengthen the parent/school connection.

Moreover, Prevention and Early Intervention services have been shown to prevent future higher levels of care, ultimately saving money. Recent Iowa State University research indicates that every dollar invested in substance abuse prevention yields \$10 in future savings.

While the Prevention and Early Interventions are efficient and effective, these reductions were put forward to City Council because the department prioritized serving consumers with the highest levels of acute need. We will continue to provide Prevention and Early Intervention services, but at a reduced level. Programs that serve children with more acute needs, such as Homebased and Youth and Family Outpatient have more modest reductions planned for FY 2010.

The reductions will affect consumers in a number of ways. There will be a reduction of 5,062 hours of direct service time with children and parents. Three of the positions being reduced or eliminated provide bilingual services, which will disproportionately affect non-native English-speaking residents. Specific information on cash reductions, together with the annual impact on services are provided below:

- The 0.5 FTE Therapist I position (\$31,871) located at Patrick Henry will be eliminated. The reduction eliminates bilingual prevention services to 40 at-risk children and 60 parents.
- The reduction of the 0.5 FTE in ID/MH Prevention (\$24,505) eliminates outreach prevention services to 145 infants aged 0-3 and their parents (including homeless shelters). The incumbent currently refers clients to the Parent Infant Education (PIE) program and provides parenting education to 120 incarcerated fathers, 90 incarcerated mothers and 420 youth at the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home.
- The reduction of the 1.0 FTE Therapist II (\$84,835) eliminates prevention services to 950 youth at George Washington Middle School and early intervention services to 40 at-risk youth identified by teachers as needing supportive counseling.
- The reduction of the 1.0 FTE Therapist I (\$70,443) eliminates bilingual prevention services to 80 at-risk children and 30 at-risk parents at Tucker Elementary School and 480 at-risk parents and children of Brent Place Apartments. It also eliminates 700 hours

---

Staff is waiting for confirmation that a second position funded by the grant (0.5 FTE) will be funded in FY 2010. Staff will revise the FY 2010 budget to account for grant changes during the FY 2010 Plan of Services Docket Item.

of adult volunteer time and 450 hours of teen volunteer time at Brent Place. These volunteer hours are valued at \$16,920 and provide mentoring to children, outreach to residents, and help support services and events.

- The reduction of the 1.0 FTE (\$55,000) in Homebased is split between Homebased (0.75) and Early Intervention (0.25). The Early Intervention reduction eliminates mental health and substance abuse screening for 40 homeless children.
- The Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation reduction decreases a full-time Therapist II to 0.5 FTE (\$36,950) and eliminates bilingual individual and group prevention and early intervention services to 80 preschool children, 150 parents/caregivers, and 80 preschool professionals.