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Alexandria Commission for Women
Status of Women Report

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City Partners

Alexandria Domestic Violence Program
Alexandria Sexual Assault Center
Alexandria Office on Housing
Alexandria Office of Human Rights
Alexandria Police Department
Alexandria Human Resources Department
Alexandria City Public Schools
Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
Alexandria Health Department

Community Contributors

Neighborhood Health
Friends of Guest House
Small Business Development Center
Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Carpenter's Shelter

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Executive Summary

Report Background

The past few years have been a time of social change. From the #MeToo movement and spotlight on sexual assault, to high-profile discussions on work-life balance, and rising political ambition for women at all levels — gender equality and the well-being of women has re-emerged at the forefront of the national conversation. Society today is wrangling with the repercussions of sexual harassment, sexual violence and assault, gender discrimination, pay disparities, unequal voice and representation, and other practices that prevent women's equality and well-being.

In the past, Alexandria has stepped forward to champion women's rights. Today, the City again has the opportunity to step into the forefront and meet new challenges head on. To guide such an effort, the Commission for Women (CFW), with help from the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), has analyzed City government and community data, conducted interviews with city and local leaders, held focus groups, and gathered regional and national information on the status of women and girls.

An Overview of Findings

Economic opportunity - Women in the City of Alexandria have come a long way since 1974, the year of the first report on the status of women in Alexandria. In 2016, nearly 60

percent of working women in Alexandria held management and professional jobs compared to 24 percent in 1970 and 40 percent in 1985.¹ More women are part of the workforce than ever before; 94 percent of Alexandria's single mothers work,² the highest rate in the region. Latina women are entering the workforce at rates that exceed all other ethnicities or races.³

Yet, Alexandria is also a city where women disproportionately work in jobs and sectors with wages that don't support the cost of living, including in healthcare support, personal care and service, and office and administrative support.⁴ In addition to lower wages, many jobs in which women predominate are not as predictable in scheduling, have fewer benefits, and less ability to take paid leave when needed.⁵ Therefore, women in these jobs may struggle when they need to care for children or other family members. They may not be able to enroll in training or classes that require a predictable schedule. Thus, leave and benefit policies greatly impact economic stability and opportunity.

Poverty, child care and housing- In a city with rapidly rising costs of living, affordable child care and housing — both issues highlighted in the three previous reports on the status of women — are critical for women with children, particularly single mothers. Housing costs represent the largest source of costs for Alexandrians, although child care costs can exceed housing expenses for households with an infant.⁶ With median earnings of \$36,000 per year, single mothers cannot afford these expenses.⁷

Moreover, many single mothers live in poverty. Poverty rates nearly doubled in Alexandria between 2006 and 2015. By 2016, 42.5 percent of female-headed households with children under age 18 lived in poverty, compared to 6 percent for married couple families and 15 percent for all families.⁸

Women of color also are more likely to be poor in Alexandria — lagging behind white women in earnings, educational outcomes, and employment rates.⁹ Twenty percent of black women and fifteen percent of Latina women in Alexandria live in poverty.¹⁰

“A family of three was considered to live below the poverty line in 2016 if their total pre-tax annual income was \$20,420 or less. Living with an income of \$40,840 for a family of three —

within its workforce, with living wage legislation, paid parental leave. However, there are still City departments in which women are under-represented.¹⁷ Gender wage gaps in City pay have narrowed, but persist, especially for women of color.¹⁸

In addition to women in the City workforce, understanding how policies and decisions made at the city government level can impact men and women differently requires the application of a gender lens. Currently, gender is not explicitly considered in City budgeting and city-planning decisions.

Women are under-represented in elected positions¹⁹ and face unique barriers to holding public office. Women seeking public office often lack mentoring and other helpful networks. Women on the campaign trail can face sexual harassment

Twenty percent of black women and fifteen percent of Latina women in Alexandria live in poverty.

twice the poverty level income — was still insufficient to make ends meet in Alexandria during 2016. According to the Basic Economic Security Tables (BEST), a family of three composed of one worker, an infant and a school-aged child requires at least an approximate annual income of \$77,604 in the City of Alexandria to meet their basic needs without receiving any public or private assistance.”¹¹

Health - While Alexandria has high rates of health insurance coverage, 12 percent of women do not have health insurance.¹² The impact of Medicaid expansion, taking effect in January 2019, is yet to be seen.¹³ In Alexandria there are health disparities for women.¹⁴ Significant numbers of women in Alexandria are dealing with obesity, depression, addiction, and other chronic health issues. Black women in Virginia are dying from childbirth and breast cancer at a much higher rate than white women.

Leadership - Women in Alexandria are transcending City government leadership. Almost half of the City workforce's leadership is comprised of women.¹⁵ The city has eight boards and commissions required by city code, and women make up 40 percent of the members compared to fewer than 25 percent in 1973.¹⁶ The City continues to make great strides for women

and threats. Youth - Based on feedback from participants in the CFW's youth focus group, girls in Alexandria are growing up to become purposeful leaders who will thrive and succeed. Girls are staying in school at higher rates than boys,²⁰ and the average scores for girls exceed that of boys in every subject in the Standards of Learning tests.²¹ However, with a high school dropout rate²² and teen pregnancy rate significantly higher than the state average,²³ there is still work to be done to ensure that all girls in Alexandria are able to reach their full potential. Moreover, there are disturbing trends in a variety of mental health indicators for adolescent girls in the city.

Safety - The CFW and the City government have worked hard to maintain comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault outreach and programs for decades. Services for these programs remain in high demand. In 2018, the Domestic Violence Program and Sexual Assault Center hotline handled an increase in calls, likely related to the #MeToo Movement. Indeed, these programs along with established avenues for sexual harassment reporting, have helped make Alexandria a city where women's safety is valued and prioritized.

Recommendations

Potential avenues to improve equal opportunity and the well-being of women can be found across the broad range of services provided by the City. Indeed, differential impacts of policies on women and men are evident in areas of planning, transportation, housing, public safety, and economic development among others.

Below is a summary of the report's broad-based recommendations. Additional details and further specific recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

1

Apply a gender lens to City decisions on budgeting and development. The City should systematically consider the gendered impacts of its policies in land use planning, transportation, and housing.

2

Create a small division (3-4 staff) that reports to the City Manager's Office and whose mission is to introduce a gender lens into policy-making and implementation across departments. The gender impact team would raise awareness of national best practices in supporting gender equity and women's well-being through public policy, and assist in implementation. The division would also focus on outreach and the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in city planning and policy-making efforts.

3

Develop a three-pronged approach for enabling women with low-wages to live and thrive in Alexandria: (i) use economic development strategies to attract and retain employers that offer a livable wage and provide exemplary leave, benefit, and scheduling policies and practices; (ii) assist workers in covering the high costs of living including through efforts to expand subsidized and market affordable housing and affordable childcare; and (iii) serve as a champion for education, workforce training, and skills development for occupations that provide higher wages.

Introduction

“Discrimination against women is so widespread, of such long standing, and so grounded in our societal patterns, economy and history, that it has come to be regarded as normal, and therefore, acceptable.”

This quote is from a letter by Vola Lawson, chairwoman of the Alexandria Ad Hoc Committee on Women and former City Manager, and contained in the Committee’s 1974 Final Report of the Alexandria Ad Hoc Committee on Women to the Alexandria City Council and the Citizens of Alexandria (The 1974 Report).²⁴

The 1974 report followed national momentum to address gender discrimination and women’s well-being. It detailed discrimination against women in City employment, education, recreation, credit, housing, and health. Actions taken after the report’s release turned the City of Alexandria into one of the nation’s leading municipalities on women’s rights and human rights for that era. The 1974 Report also brought about the creation of Alexandria’s permanent Commission for Women (CFW), one of the first of its kind in the country.

Forty-five years later, gender equality and the well-being of women has again come to the forefront of national conversation. Society today is wrangling with the repercussions of sexual harassment, sexual violence and assault, gender discrimination, pay disparities, unequal voice and representation, and other practices that prevent women’s equality and well-being. In order to understand how these and

other issues affect Alexandrians, the CFW has set about to again develop an understanding of the status of women within Alexandria.

For this report, the CFW examined successes, concerns, historical data, and emerging trends for women and girls who live in Alexandria. The CFW also looked at programs and services that aim to address these concerns, analyzed women’s pay and representation in the City workforce, and began exploration of how gender can be better included in the practices and policies of the City government, among other important topics.

This report and accompanying recommendations are intended to provide City leaders, staff, community leaders and members, as well as the CFW itself, important information and perspectives to enable the creation of strategic responses and actions tailored to address the challenges faced by women and girls in Alexandria.

Indeed, the CFW hopes that this gathering and assessment of information will prove to be a strong tool in resisting what Vola Lawson described in 1974 and what we as a society are revisiting today — the tendency to allow longstanding inequities to continue as though they are normal.

Framework

This report is structured around five pillars of equality and well-being:

- Economic Security
- Opportunity
- Healthcare
- Leadership
- Safety

These pillars allow for assessment of fundamental aspects of well-being such as health and safety, and components of equality in a modern society, including political and community participation, positions in leadership, opportunity for advancement and skill development, and economic stability. These categories reflect the charge of the CFW and were likewise covered in the three prior CFW reports (1974, 1985, and 2008). The Institute for Women's Policy Research²⁵ also includes these areas in their reports, allowing for comparisons with other jurisdictions around the country.

Scope

Members of the CFW compiled the information included in this report with assistance from City staff. However, some necessary data was unavailable, and other data could not be obtained due to lack of resources.

Thus, the report does not include information on several topics including the following:

- City recreation leagues and programs
- Title IX implementation in ACPS
- Content of school textbooks (included in the 1974 and 1985 reports)
- Information on how ACPS handles reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault
- Details on pathways from high school to community college and workforce training
- Issues facing the LGBTQ community

The CFW also did not conduct specific analyses of older women or women living with disabilities. The needs of these women are extremely important and it is the hope of the CFW that they are well represented by the Commission on Aging and the Disabilities Commission as well as other boards and commissions.

Methodology

The Commission for Women used a variety of methods to collect the data and information that is represented in this report. These include:

- Analysis of key demographic, economic, health and safety indicators gathered from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Center for Disease Control.
- Analysis of city and community reports and studies including: Alexandria Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, Alexandria's Community Health Improvement Plan for 2014-2019, Early Care and Education in Alexandria Risk and Reach Study, Community Survey by Amigas de la Comunidad and George Mason University, the City of Alexandria's 2016 Pay Equity Analysis, the Alexandria 2017 Resident Survey, fact sheets and market updates from the Office on Housing, and others cited in the report.
- Analysis of national and regional information and reports, in particular materials from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the Washington Area Women's Foundation, National Women's Law Center, data from the Center for Disease Control, Alexandria Health Department, and the Mayor's Guide: Accelerating Gender Equality.
- Focus groups including:
 - Clients receiving DCHS services
 - Peer mentors at T.C. Williams High School

Field research and semi-structured interviews with staff in City departments and community organizations, including Department of Community and Human Services, Office of Housing, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), Office of Human Rights, Carpenter's Shelter, Alexandria Health Department, and others.

CFW internal discussions around the formation of recommendations.

Economic Security and Vulnerability

In many ways, life for women and girls in Alexandria is a tale of two cities.

A large number of women in Alexandria are economically secure. They are employed in professional positions and earn salaries that enable them to live in the city, especially if they have a bachelor's degree or higher, are single without children, or married.

However, substantial numbers of women in Alexandria are economically vulnerable. Single mothers, who have high participation in the labor force, do not earn enough to support children. Single mothers also tend to lag significantly behind other women in Alexandria in educational attainment. More than one-third of families with single mothers live in poverty.

Black women and Latinas are also more likely to struggle to live in Alexandria. Black women and Latinas face higher unemployment, lower earnings, and more significant pay gaps.

All women in Alexandria are affected by gender disparities in pay. And women are disproportionately employed in jobs that provide low-wages, rely on tips, have inconsistent schedules, and/or involuntary reductions in hours. Some employees in the city could benefit from new paid leave laws, but information about paid leave and workplace flexibilities in Alexandria's private sector are unknown.

Women, like all Alexandria residents, face high costs of living. With lower earnings, pay gaps, and often greater family

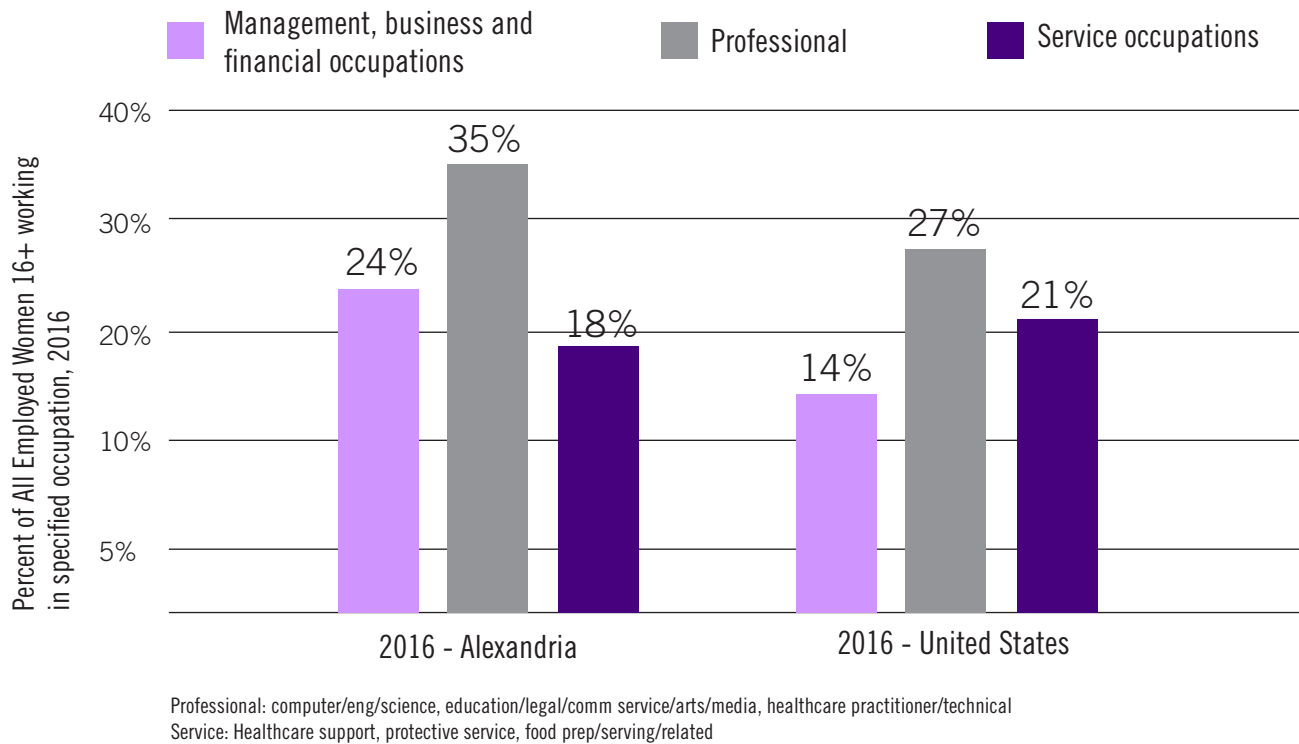
responsibilities and underemployment, women have fewer financial resources to cover these costs. High costs pose a greater threat to economic security for single parents, the vast majority of whom are women, as families require more food, larger housing spaces, and child care.

Women and the Paid Workforce

When Alexandria's City Council first commissioned a report on the status of women in the early 1970s, just over half of the families in the country had one parent earning income in the workforce and one full-time person providing care at home.²⁶ Today, only 21 percent of families in the nation fit this description. A full 79 percent of families have two parents involved in the workforce.²⁷ Alexandria is no exception to this national movement.

Labor force participation, at 75 percent, is higher in Alexandria than in any surrounding jurisdiction.²⁸ Participation in the labor force tends to increase with education levels²⁹ and is higher for black women and Latinas than any other race or ethnicity.³⁰ Compared to other jurisdictions in the region, Alexandria also has among the highest labor force participation rate for women older than 65.³¹ Between the ages of 25-54, women have the highest labor force participation compared to other ages, at 88 percent.³²

Women Working in Management, Professional and Service Occupations



Signs of Success

Almost 60 percent of employed women in Alexandria women have stable jobs with good incomes and benefits, largely in management, legal services, education, business, and other professional occupations.³³ Federal agencies, local and state government, and knowledge economy jobs (technology, legal services, communications, etc.) are a major source of employment and income for women living in Alexandria. Seven of the top 10 largest employers in Alexandria are government employers, and another two are government contracting firms.³⁴

Unemployment is relatively low for women in Alexandria at 4.3 percent, about the same rate as for men.

Alexandria Small Business Development Center

Women own 31 percent of businesses in Alexandria and many of them receive support from the Alexandria Small Business Development Center (SBDC).³⁵ Hosted by the Alexandria

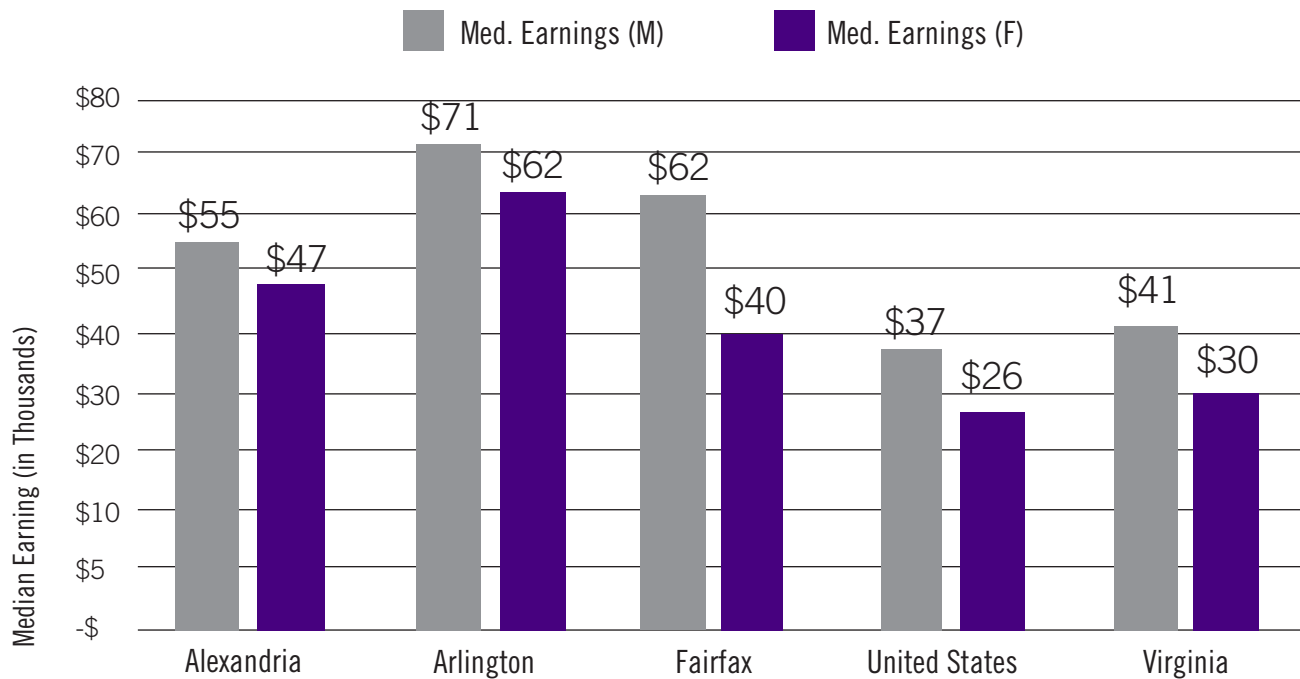
Economic Development Partnership and funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the City of Alexandria, and the regional banking community, the SBDC provides counseling and support services to local entrepreneurs. Specifically, the SBDC will work with clients helps to complete a business planning guide and prepare for meetings with banks to secure small business loans. In addition, the SBDC provides advice on finance management, human resources, contracts, and social media.

Since its founding in 1996, the Alexandria SBDC has served almost 2,000 local small business owners including more than 900 women who were considering starting a business or who had already launched a business. In 2016, the SBDC worked with 242 clients, 55 percent of whom were women.³⁶ The Alexandria SBDC is part of a network of 28 SBDCs in Virginia and more than 1,000 nationwide. Local women small business owners also access additional resources at the Women’s Business Center of Northern Virginia, located in Springfield, which is a program of the Community Business Partnership, Inc.

Median Earnings in 2015 Dollars (in Thousands)

Universe Population 16 and over with Earnings

Source: American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, 2015



Median earnings for women in Alexandria are around \$47,000 per year.³⁷ For women with bachelor's degrees and graduate degrees, these figures rise to around \$56,000 and \$76,000, respectively.³⁸

Women with a bachelor's or graduate degrees earn more than is necessary for a single person with no children to meet basic needs and build minimal emergency and retirement savings, which is \$33,864, as defined by the Basic Economic Security Tables (BEST) index,³⁹ a tool put together by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR).⁴⁰

Likewise, the average income for women who work for the City of Alexandria, \$65,012,⁴¹ enables a single woman to meet basic needs for herself, a partner, or an infant to live in the city. This income level is not enough for a partner and a child or to support more than one child.

In addition, another sign of success is that in 2000, Alexandria became the first jurisdiction in Virginia to adopt a "living wage" ordinance for all City employees and contractors.⁴²

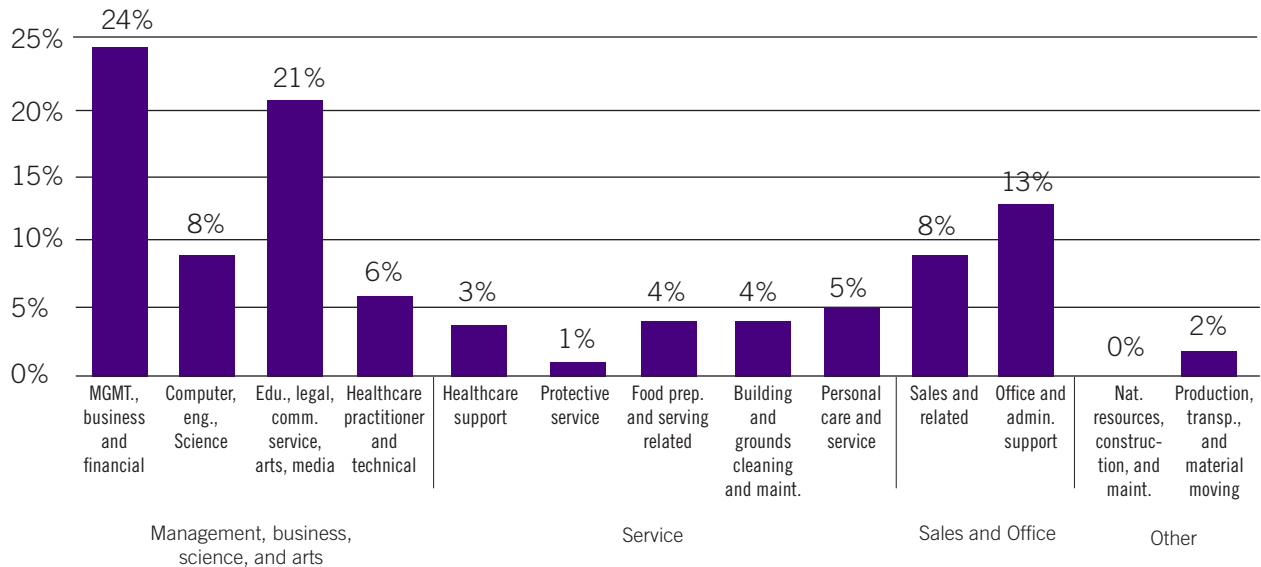
Economic Vulnerability

Contrary to the successes that women have had in employment and earnings, 40 percent of employed women in Alexandria work in lower-paying, less-flexible and less stable occupations.⁴³ These lower paying jobs, such as child-care workers, personal and home care aides, and social and human service assistants are within some of the few industries have grown in their share of workers in Alexandria since the early 2000s.⁴⁴ They are also characterized by uncertainty in work hours, inflexibility for addressing life and family needs, and limitations in career and income growth.

This trend mirrors what's happening regionally and nationally. Women are more likely than men to be employed in low-wage occupations in the Washington, DC region, regardless of a women's race and ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment or place of birth.⁴⁵ Moreover, low income women in the Washington, DC regional workforce are disproportionately women of color (81 percent) and were born abroad (49 percent).⁴⁶

Occupational Statistics for Employed Civilian Women Ages 16 and Over: Percent of all Female Employment

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015



The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that many of the occupations that will grow most over the next ten years are low-paying predominantly female-held jobs.⁴⁷ Indeed, women make up the majority of workers in low wage jobs. Women are overrepresented in low wage jobs (jobs that typically pay \$10.10 per hour or less), meaning that they make up a higher share of low wage workers than their share of all workers, and this trend is expected to continue. Overrepresentation in low wage jobs is especially acute for women of color, mothers, single women, and women without a bachelor's degree. As the National Women's Law Center points out: "Addressing the needs of low-wage workers requires addressing the needs of women."⁴⁸

Underemployment

Women, and women with children in particular, are more likely than men to work part-time or be underemployed,⁵⁰ meaning they would prefer full-time work but face an involuntary reduction in hours.⁵¹ Women also represent two-thirds of tipped-workers in the country.⁵² Tipped workers, almost half of whom have a high school degree or less, have low minimum wages (\$2.13 is the national minimum wage for tipped

workers), unpredictable schedules, and experience a high rate of harassment by their employers and customers.

For women in low-wage jobs and underemployed women, including tipped workers, scheduling challenges can be extremely difficult. Unpredictable work scheduling practices make it difficult to arrange for child care.⁵³ Many child-care providers cannot care for children on a schedule that changes regularly, nor can they cover irregular hours. Indeed, women in Alexandria have cited shift work as a major barrier to finding child care. Unpredictable work schedules also make it tougher to pursue education or training while holding down a job.

For those who need a second part-time job to make ends meet because they cannot get enough hours at their primary job, unpredictable scheduling practices can make juggling two jobs very difficult. Individuals managing serious medical conditions are often denied the control over their schedules that they need to both manage their conditions and hold down their jobs.

With an increasing number of women financially responsible for their families,⁵⁴ low wages, underemployment, unpredictable scheduling, and lack of paid leave are significant factors in family poverty.⁵⁵

Women make up more than half of the workers in Alexandria in:

Health Care Support – **79%**

Personal Care and Service – **80%**

Health Care Practitioner and Technical – **71 %**

Office and Administrative Support – **67%**⁴⁹

Single Mothers Struggle to Support their Families

In 1974, the majority of women who worked in Alexandria were single.⁵⁶ They worked because they needed to feed their families, or themselves, yet they were paid less and given fewer opportunities to advance. This situation was particularly dire for single mothers, two-thirds of whom worked. As the 1974 report noted, “Women who are heads of families often bear the brunt of discrimination. When these women are discriminated against, the effect is felt not only by them, but by their families.” These words still ring true.

Today, a full 94 percent of single mothers in Alexandria hold a job or are looking for one (the highest rate in the region)⁵⁷ and two-thirds of married women participate in the labor force.⁵⁸ However, single mothers tend to be less educated and concentrated in lower paying jobs than their married counterparts.⁵⁹ Their wages are not enough to support their families.

Raising children in Alexandria is expensive. According to the BEST Index from IWPR, a single person requires about \$34,000 per year to meet basic needs and build minimal retirement savings. A single mother with two children between the ages of 6 and 12 years requires nearly \$64,000, while one parent and an infant require over \$70,000.⁶⁰

While median earnings for women are around \$47,000 (\$56,000 and \$76,000 for women with bachelor’s and master’s degrees), single mothers earn only around \$36,000 on average.⁶¹

The “motherhood” pay gap helps to deepen this divide. In Virginia, a woman who has children is paid 69 cents for every dollar paid to a man with children⁶² (compared to an overall gender wage gap of 78 percent in Virginia).⁶³

It is no surprise then, that in 2016 in Alexandria, more than 40 percent of all female-headed households with children under 18 years old lived in poverty.⁶⁴ By contrast, 6 percent of married couple households lived in poverty.⁶⁵

Also, the poverty rate for Alexandria’s children is increasing. In 2016, it was 16.4 percent,⁶⁶ not far from the national rate of 18 percent,⁶⁷ but double the rate of neighboring Arlington and Fairfax counties.⁶⁸

With one in four children in Alexandria living with a single mother (less than one in 10 live with a single father),⁶⁹ the City government must do everything it can to help single parents get the support they need to provide for their families, just as it has taken steps to provide a living wage to its own employees and contractors.

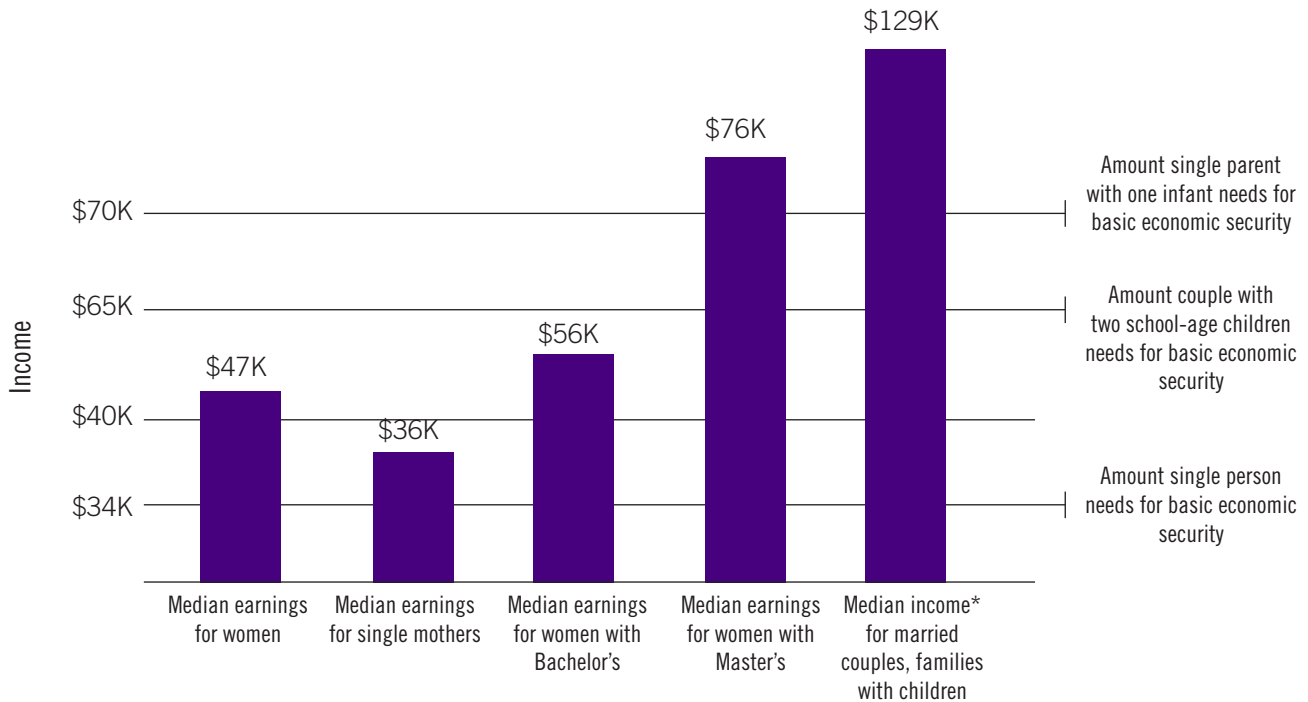
Women of Color Lag Behind White Women

The tale of two cities persists between white women and women of color. On average, black and Hispanic women in Alexandria don’t earn enough to cover their basic needs,⁷⁰ as outlined by the BEST index.

While Latina women are entering the workforce at a higher rate than all other women throughout the region,⁷¹ the unemployment rate in Alexandria is twice as high for

Basic Economic Security for Alexandrians

From the Institute for Women's Policy Research's Basic Economic Security Table (BEST Index)
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015



black women and Latina women (8 percent and 7 percent respectively) as it is for white women and Asian women.⁷²

In addition, 20 percent of black women and 15 percent of Latina women live in poverty, as compared to 7 percent of white women.⁷³

The Pay Gap Persists

As a whole, income earned by women in Alexandria — and across the nation — still lags behind men for the simple fact that they are women. The gender pay gap in Alexandria, which exists even after controlling for education and experience in the workplace, results in women earning 85 cents for every dollar a man earns⁷⁴ (the national average is 80 cents⁷⁵). This means that, per year, at the median, women earn \$8,000 less than men in Alexandria.

In general, the wage gap is larger for workers with higher levels of educational attainment. This is true in Alexandria, where women with a graduate or professional degree see a higher wage gap than do women with less education (.75 cents on the dollar), with one notable exception. The largest wage gap in Alexandria is experienced by women with less than a high

school diploma. These women earn only 69 cents for every dollar earned by men with less than a high school diploma.

Women of color in Alexandria feel the impact of the gender wage gap to a higher degree than white women. Nationally, black women are paid 63 cents and Latina women are paid 54 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.⁷⁶ In the larger Washington D.C. region, the disparity is even greater -- black women are paid 53 cents and Latina women are paid 33 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men.⁷⁷

Finally, women in Alexandria have also faced a sharper drop in wages since the 2008 recession, compared to men.⁷⁸

High Costs of Living: Housing, Child Care, Food

The largest source of financial stress in Alexandria is housing. The average rent for a market rate one-bedroom apartment increased by 94 percent since 2000 to \$1,760 per month in October, 2017.⁷⁹

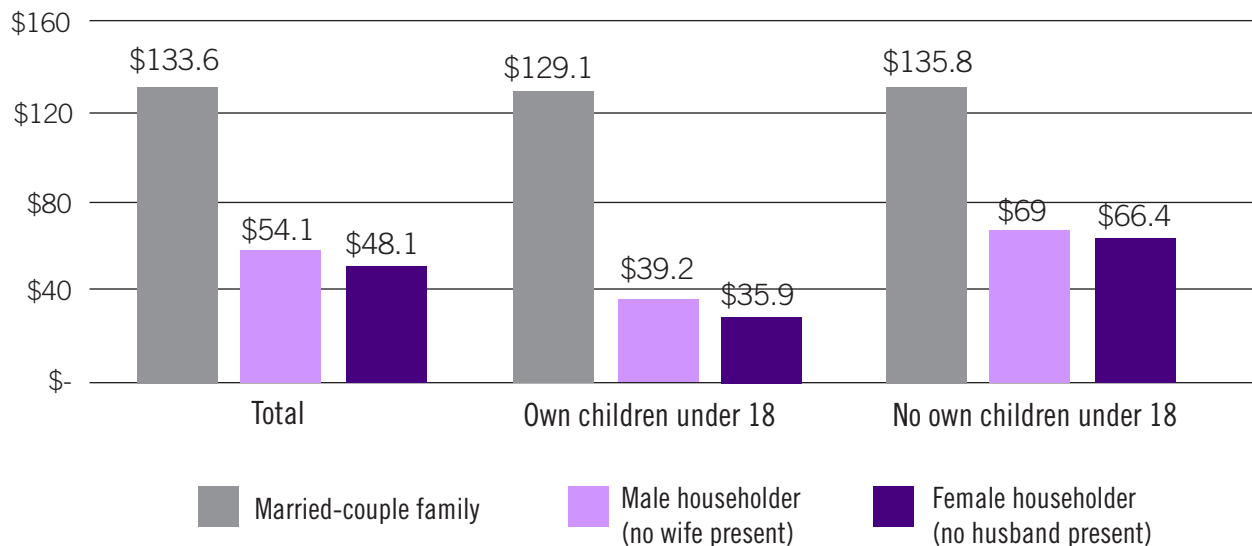
For the average City of Alexandria female employee earning \$65,012 per year,⁸⁰ affordable rent would be \$1,625 per month,⁸¹ almost enough to afford the average rent for a one-bedroom. A woman who earns at Alexandria's median for women, around \$50,000 per year,⁸² could afford to pay \$1,250 per month in housing, putting her monthly earnings \$500 below the average rent for a one-bedroom.

Renters comprised 57 percent of the city's populace from 2012 to 2016,⁸³ compared to 36 percent nationally.⁸⁴ Among

These housing costs are compounded by a lack of affordable housing options in Alexandria. Currently, there are only 1,749 market-rate affordable housing units in the city, which is down from 18,218 units in 2000.⁸⁷ Waitlists for subsidized and public housing are long. The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) reported that 1,197 women are currently on the waitlist for public housing. Two-thirds of the waitlisted applicants for public housing are women and one-third are women with children. Another 1,462 women are on the waitlist

Median Family Income by Presence of Spouse and Children

Source: ACS 5-Year Data, 2011-2015



renters in Alexandria, 44 percent, spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Comparatively, 22 percent of homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs.⁸⁵

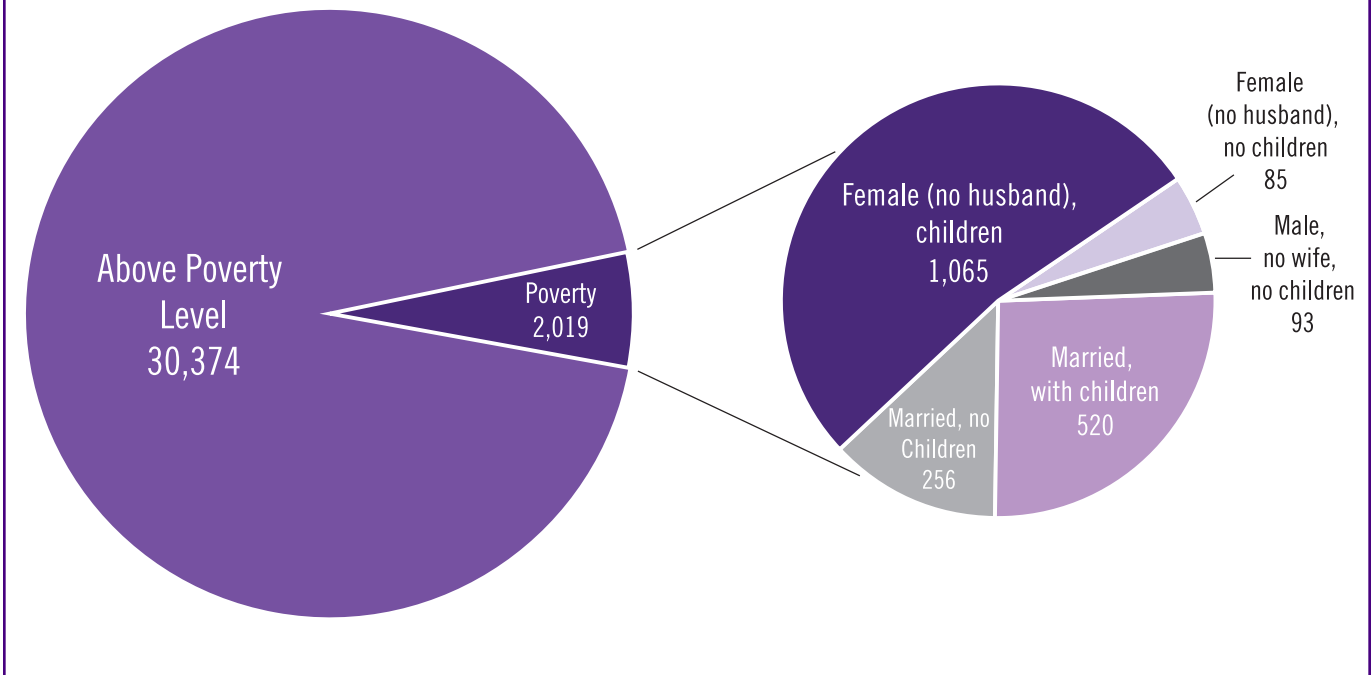
According to the 2017 Out of Reach Report developed by the National Low Income Housing Coalition,⁸⁶ a person earning the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour in 2017 in Alexandria would need to work 185 hours per week to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent rate.

for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. More than two-thirds of the waitlisted applicants for the Housing Choice Voucher Program are women and 40 percent are women with children.⁸⁸

With the federal government considering drastic funding cuts to public housing across the country, the situation could become increasingly dire in Alexandria. For single mothers especially, as well as other families with children, the problem is made worse by the fact that the majority of the affordable housing units that are available are one-bedroom units. Currently, only 7 percent of market-rate affordable units have three bedrooms or more.⁸⁹ As such, the Housing Department's

Family Structure by Poverty Level

Source: ACS 2015 5-Year Estimates



public housing waitlist indicates a need for more two bedroom units.

High housing costs also mean that lower-income Alexandrians may have no options but to live in substandard housing. As part of a broader research project organized by George Mason University, a group of 100 Latina leaders in the community talked about their challenges with housing. Many of these women and their families live in one-bedroom apartments with four people crowded into one bedroom. They have problems with bed bugs, cockroaches, mice, and mold.

Others end up living in larger apartments with people they don't know – paying rent to lease holders who maintain control over their living spaces, some even going so far as to restrict access to the kitchen or limit when the family can be in the apartment. More than three-quarters of the CFW's focus

group participants would change their family's living situation if they could.

Recent Actions on Housing Affordability

The CFW applauds the ways that City Council has been addressing the affordable housing issue, including the recently approved 15 percent tax on meals at Alexandria restaurants, which aims to raise close to \$5 million annually for the City's affordable housing trust fund.⁹⁰

The CFW has been participating in the work of the City's Resolution 830 working group. This group aims to review and modernize Resolution 830, an initiative passed by the City in 1981 that mandated certain standards for public housing,

More than two-thirds of the waitlisted applicants for the Housing Choice Voucher Program are women and 40 percent are women with children.

including a requirement that public housing can only be demolished after replacement housing is available or relocation is enabled for its residents. When Resolution 830 was first passed, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) was the primary provider of affordable housing in the city. Now, that need is also being filled by nonprofit and private developers. However, as federal resources for housing continue to decrease, ARHA is struggling to fill the growing need for affordable housing that exists in Alexandria. The CFW is pleased to provide input and insight into this process, as participants of the working group.

There is still more work to be done to increase housing affordability in this city and women’s voices and experiences are key to changing the housing landscape in the most effective way possible.

Child Care

For Alexandria women with young children, child care is a major expense – second only to housing. About one quarter of families in Alexandria include children under the age of six.⁹¹ There are 80 licensed child-care centers, 12 regulated child-care centers,

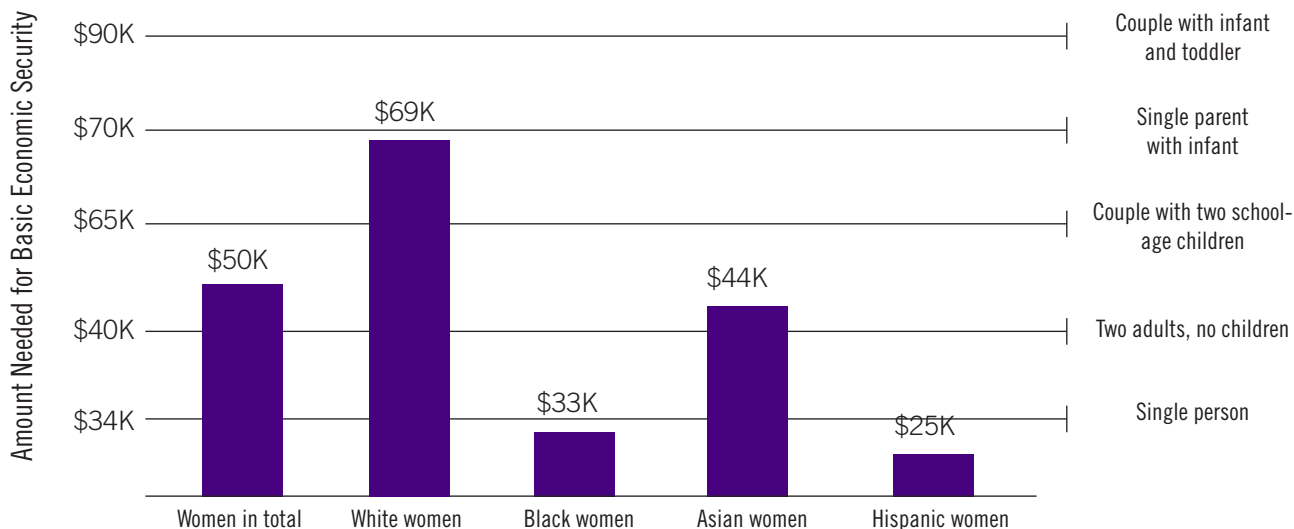
and 102 family day-care home providers in Alexandria. Subsidies are accepted at 26 of these programs.⁹²

For parents who are paying out of pocket, \$1,470 per month for an infant is considered to be at the low end of the market rate, according to Robin Crawley, Chief of the Department of Community and Human Services Early Childhood Division. For parents with two children in child care, costs can exceed \$2,365 per month. A recent estimate by Arlington County staff puts average child-care costs in Alexandria at around \$37,787 annually.⁹³

Clearly, average costs for child care are out of reach for single mothers. In fact, average child-care costs exceed the average annual earnings for single mothers, which is \$36,000.⁹⁴ Given the high costs, there are a variety of subsidies to help families afford care. Currently, there are 1,167 children in the city of Alexandria who are receiving free or subsidized child care through a variety of programs —state subsidy, local fee subsidy, Virginia Preschool Initiative Programs, Head Start and Early Head Start. About half of the child-care programs in Alexandria participate in the Child Care Subsidy Program.⁹⁵

Median Earnings of Women by Race/Ethnicity (from BEST Index)

From the Institute for Women’s Policy Research
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015



However, these subsidies are not enough. Funding levels do not cover all the low-income families who want care. Also, many families seeking assistance do not qualify for the subsidies because they do not meet all of the program’s requirements, such as initiating child support actions against a parent not supporting a child. Immigration requirements are another barrier to child care in Alexandria.

Even if a family meets all the requirements for a subsidized program, additional barriers can prevent them from using the program. Underemployed women with shifting hours of work may not find a care provider who can, or can afford to, shift hours of care on an unpredictable basis. Non-traditional hours of care are extremely difficult to cover. If a mother has her child in a subsidized program and is temporarily out of a job, she can lose eligibility for that child care. All of these limitations fall heavily on women in lower paying, less stable jobs.

Child care location and transportation to child care are major factors in a family’s ability to access child care, especially for families that rely on pedestrian transport and public transportation. These issues will be covered further in this report.

For families who do not qualify for subsidies, demand for affordable child care is high. There are often long waiting lists for affordable programs.

Despite the high cost of child care, the City government, ACPS and the federal government (except for a few agencies that voluntarily offer subsidies) do not assist their employees with accessing or paying for off-site child care.

The CFW could not obtain information about whether, or which, major private employers in Alexandria provide child-care subsidies to their employees. This information is not collected by the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership.

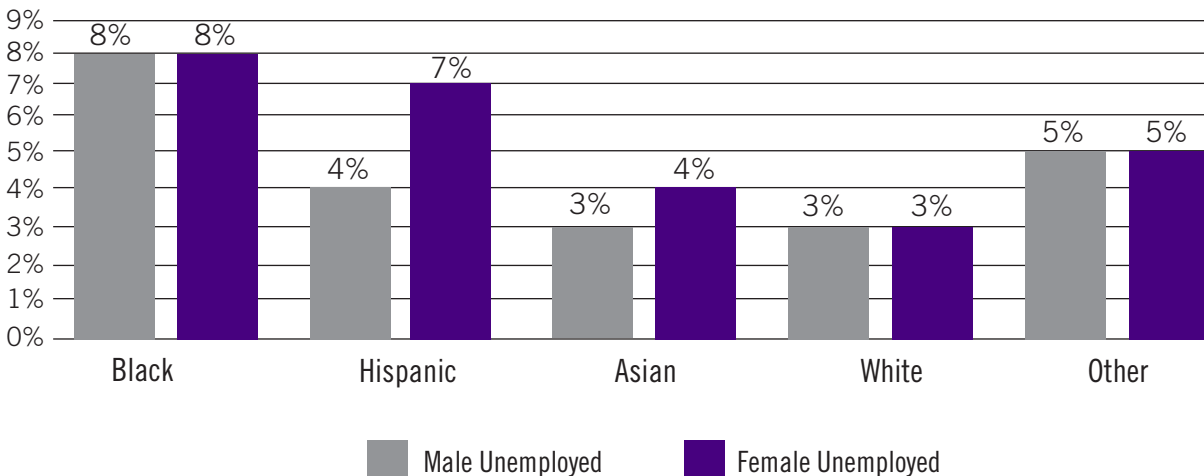
Aftercare for School-age Children

For families with elementary school-age children, aftercare (a child-care program available for the period between the end of the school day and the end of the parent’s work day) is much more affordable and accessible than child care for young children.

The City’s Department of Recreation aftercare program costs \$400 per year, and cost is adjusted based on income. Children are bused from local elementary schools to the City’s recreation centers. Campagna Kids, managed by the Campagna Center,⁹⁶ is one of the largest private aftercare programs in the city, located at 11 of the 12 elementary schools. Fees are determined

Unemployment by Sex and Race

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015
 Note: Results are not statistically significant



on a sliding scale based on income, ranging from \$20 to \$400 a month per child.

These programs meet an urgent demand that was identified in the 1985 report.⁹⁷ According to the report, while child care availability had increased dramatically in the decade since the 1974 report was written, there were still few options for aftercare for school-age children.

At that time, the YMCA provided aftercare in three elementary schools to accommodate a total of 90 children, and the City's Recreation Department provided some after-school classes. However, according to the 1985 report: "It would be impossible to document accurately the number of children, as young as kindergarten, who go home alone to an empty house every day."

The CFW is very pleased to report such progress in aftercare services for elementary school-age children. Challenges persist for after school programs and extracurricular activities for students at the middle school level, as pointed out in a staff interview with former School Board member Karen Graf.

Food Costs

Food is also a significant expense for women in Alexandria. Ten percent of Alexandria's households are food insecure, which

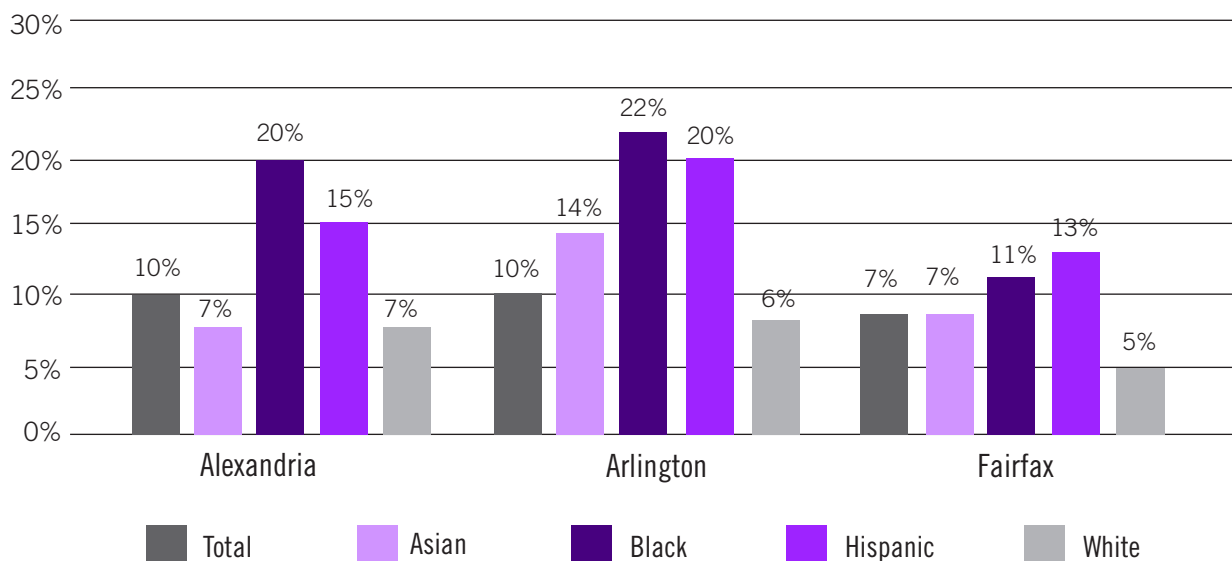
means they lack reliable access to affordable, nutritious food for an active, healthy life for all household members, according to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap Report.⁹⁸ Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. In fact, food insecurity often reflects a household's need to trade off the purchase of nutritionally adequate food for other basic needs such as housing or medical bills.

More than 40 percent of food insecure households in Alexandria are likely not eligible for federal nutrition programs because their income is above 130 percent of the poverty level.⁹⁹ This includes close to 30 percent of children (although 63 percent of students at ACPS are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program). In fact, the City of Alexandria ranks 20th in the country for counties with the largest gap between maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) per meal benefit and average low-income meal costs. The average cost of a meal in Alexandria is 68 percent more than the SNAP benefit.¹⁰⁰

For those eligible for SNAP, enrollment can be a time-consuming process that often serves as a barrier to participating in the program. Among immigrant women and families, a fear of deportation influences decisions to seek enrollment in SNAP and other programs.

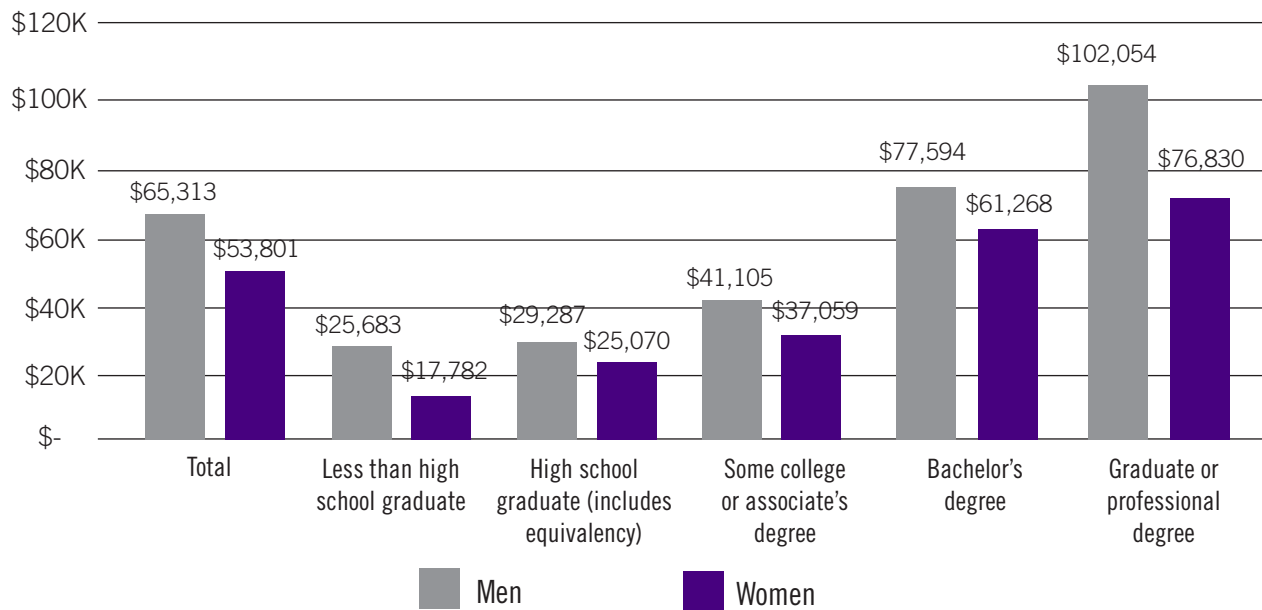
Female Poverty Status by Race and Ethnicity

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015



Median Earnings in the past 12 months by Sex and Education

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015, Population 25 Years and Older
All Data Statistically Significant Between Men and Women



Homelessness

Homelessness in Alexandria continues to be an issue that presents challenges for women. According to the 2018 Point-in-Time Count (PIT) (a nationwide count of homeless people required by the federal government on a single night in January), there were 226 homeless people in Alexandria — a reduction by almost half from the 2011 PIT Count of 416 homeless people. Of this total, 42 were women without children.¹⁰¹ Another 84 were women with children comprising 29 households, 24 of which were single mothers with children.¹⁰²

Currently, there are three options for emergency shelter for homeless people in Alexandria — the Alexandria Community Shelter, Carpenter’s Shelter, and the Domestic Violence Shelter. The CFW spoke with staff at the Carpenter’s Shelter to highlight the specific ways that homelessness affects women in Alexandria.

Carpenter’s Shelter staff report that “beds at the Carpenter’s Shelter consistently remain 80 to 90 percent full.” Despite this need, women seeking shelter have never been turned away in the past decade. Of the families seeking shelter at the Carpenter’s Shelter, Deputy Director Mary Parker Lamm stated

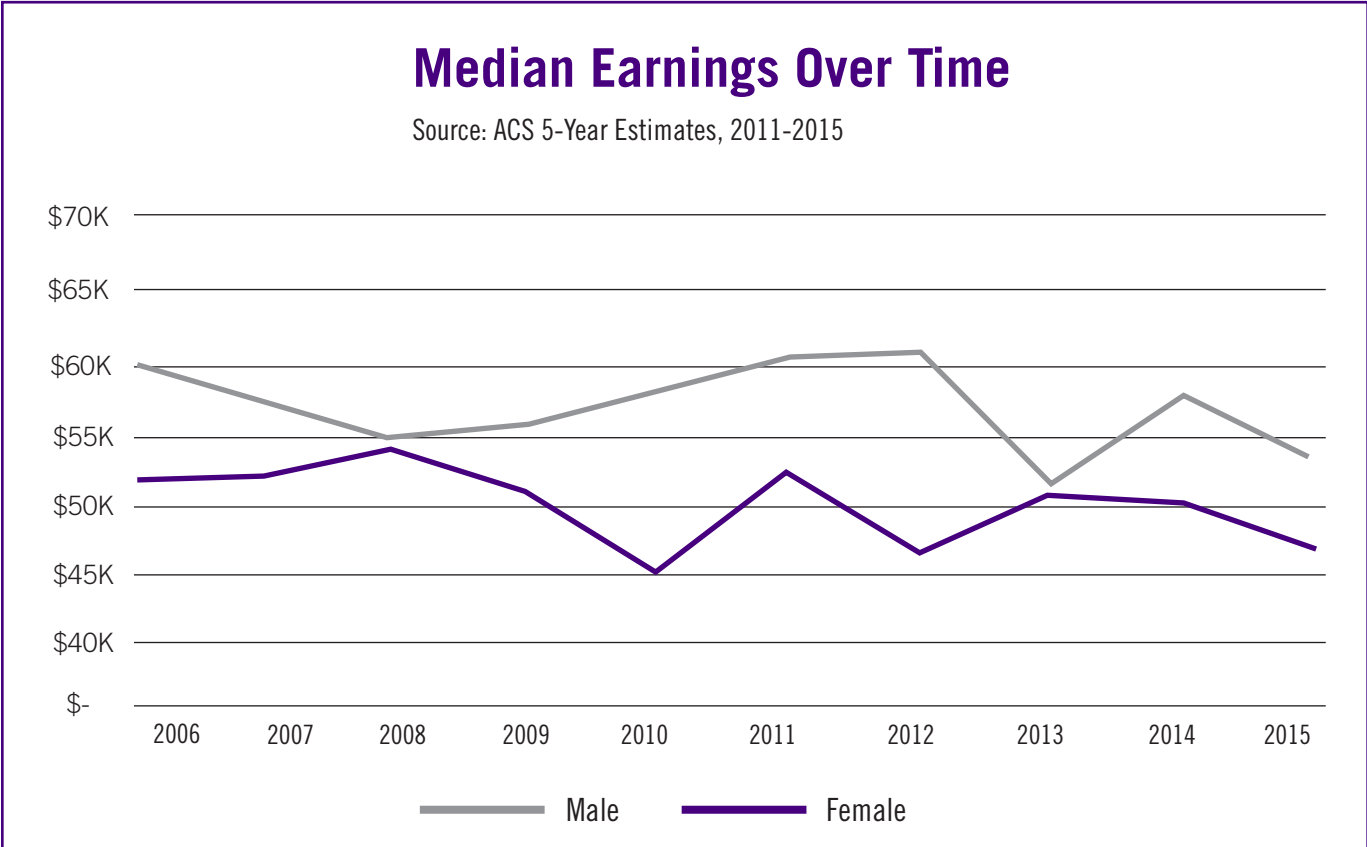
that “95 percent are single-parent, women-led households — less than one percent are single-parent households led by men, and four percent are two-parent households.”

Homeless women without children tend to become homeless because of mental health issues or substance use, according to Carpenter’s Shelter staff. Single women with children tend to become homeless because of economic issues; many are stuck in low-wage jobs without benefits. Mental health can also become a factor for these women.

For many women, domestic violence plays a significant role in homelessness. During the 2018 PIT count, 39 total females reported a history of domestic violence at any time in their past, which was 23 percent of adults surveyed.¹⁰³

Homeless service providers in the city have multiple interventions to help people in Alexandria move out of homelessness by obtaining and maintaining housing and increasing self-sufficiency. However, even with these interventions, the lack of affordable housing for families at the lowest income ranges forces these residents to often seek homeless prevention or emergency shelter services.

Single women with children tend to become homeless because of economic issues; many are stuck in low-wage jobs without benefits.



Barriers to Opportunity

For women in Alexandria, getting ahead is not easy. Discrimination still exists in both overt and subtle forms. Women still struggle with pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, the gender pay gap, barriers to certain occupations, accessing care for children and other family members, balancing work and family responsibilities, fear of violence, and access to healthcare among other challenges.

Additionally, there are other factors that can hold back both women and men in the city. And while they must be addressed for all, these factors challenge women more acutely, particularly when those women are single mothers. This section looks at education, incarceration, transportation, workplace flexibility, pregnancy discrimination, and lack of English language skills as factors that impact opportunity for women and girls to reach their full potential.

Education

On several indicators of educational achievement, girls are outperforming boys in Alexandria City Public Schools. In the 2018 Standards of Learning (SOL), girls in Alexandria outperformed their male counterparts in every subject.¹⁰⁴ (However, ACPS general pass rates tend to be lower than state averages.¹⁰⁵) Girls in Alexandria finish high school at a higher rate than boys, but with a high school dropout rate of 8 percent in 2015,¹⁰⁶ and a high school graduation rate of 82 percent,¹⁰⁷ girls in Alexandria are still well behind girls in

neighboring jurisdictions and the state. The city's overall high school graduation rate is also significantly lower – and the dropout rate significantly higher — than nearby locales and the state average.

In 2014, 69 percent of female graduates from ACPS enrolled in postsecondary institutions compared to 52 percent of males.¹⁰⁸ ACPS students who enter two or four year institutions after high school have a high persistence rate, meaning they stay enrolled for their second year of post-secondary education at rates higher than for graduates from similar school systems.

Women who receive a high school diploma, or equivalent, earn 41 percent more than women who do not. This is a greater increase in earnings than it is for men, who see a 14 percent increase with a diploma or equivalent. The largest difference in earnings related to educational attainment for women is completion of a bachelor's degree compared to women with some college or an associate's degree. Women who have a bachelor's degree earn 65 percent more than women with some college or an associate's degree.¹⁰⁹

In the 2016 Developmental Assets Survey results from T.C. Williams 10th and 12th graders, fewer girls than boys felt that they had a caring neighborhood or a caring school climate. While more girls felt motivated to achieve and that they positive school engagement, fewer felt bonded to the school. Fewer girls also felt safety was an asset in their lives. Finally, fewer girls than boys relayed that they had a sense of purpose in their

Women who have a bachelor's degree earn 65 percent more than women with some college or an associate's degree

lives and fewer girls rated self esteem as an internal asset they possessed, contrasting their higher possession of an array of assets related to positive values and social competencies.¹¹⁰

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

Women remain underrepresented in the science and engineering fields, with the greatest disparities in engineering and computer sciences. Women in Alexandria mirror nationwide trends with fewer degrees earned in the typically high-earning Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) sectors. Only 45 percent of Alexandria women with a bachelor's degree have a degree in STEM, compared to 57 percent of men, while 6 percent of women in Alexandria work in STEM-related fields, compared to 9 percent of men.¹¹¹ There are substantially more job opportunities in the STEM sector -- employment in STEM fields grew by 24.4 percent over the past decade, compared to 4 percent growth in non-STEM fields.¹¹² STEM workers typically earn higher wages; in 2015, STEM workers earned 29 percent more than their non-STEM counterparts.¹¹³

One example of a fast-growing STEM field is cybersecurity. In the Washington metropolitan area, cybersecurity job postings have grown 74 percent since 2014.¹¹⁴ Several programs have been created locally to increase training for these jobs -- the Virginia Scholarship for Service Program is a competitive scholarship program that offers up to two years of tuition relief in a cyber-related field in return for service as a cyber professional for a state entity.¹¹⁵ Northern Virginia Community College and Old Dominion University have created a cybersecurity pathway program.¹¹⁶ In addition, the two institutions created a guaranteed transfer partnership agreement to address a nationwide problem for community college students who lose an average of 13 credits when they transfer, thereby diminishing their chances of earning a bachelor's degree and increasing tuition debt.¹¹⁷

The Academy of Health Sciences at T.C. Williams is an example of a Career and Technical Education pathway that provides high school students classes for college credit within medicine and health care. This program represents a partnership between T.C. Williams and George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, where students will have guaranteed admission if they complete the pathway program.¹¹⁸

Lack of English Language Skills

Nearly 5.3 million people in the U.S. who are heads of household have limited or no ability to speak English.¹¹⁹ Lack of English language skills also hinders women and girls in Alexandria. ACPS serves more than 15,000 students who represent more than 118 countries and speak 120 languages. Throughout ACPS, one in three kindergartners qualifies for English Language Learner (ELL) support, which is more than twice the Virginia average. Overall, 30 percent of ACPS students require English Learners (EL) services.¹²⁰

More than a quarter of all Alexandrians speak a language other than English as their primary language, which is higher than the national average of 21 percent. In 2015, the most common non-English language spoken in Alexandria was Spanish followed by Amharic and Arabic.¹²¹

The CFW recognizes that while the barriers faced by women learning English in Alexandria are multi-faceted and complex, the City and community must seek avenues that enable English learners to draw upon their strengths and skills. For example, lack of English language ability becomes a barrier for women who are required to demonstrate employment skills through national, industry-led and standardized workforce credentials. In 2017, the City's Workforce Development Center partnered with other community groups to host the fourth annual Skilled Immigrant Conference at Northern Virginia Community College.

Many of the people who attended were highly skilled, but faced significant hurdles finding work in their fields – oftentimes, because they couldn’t successfully transfer their certificate or license from abroad or earn credit for any education and professional experience earned abroad. This limits women with skills to taking jobs that do not utilize their skills and presumably pay less and have fewer benefits.

Incarceration

Incarcerated women face significant barriers to opportunity. These can include consumer, housing, and family law issues that impact women far after incarceration. Incarcerated people can also face fines, restitution, and interest. Additionally, benefits stop during incarceration and often times penalties accrue. Upon re-integration into the community, some formerly incarcerated people may no longer be eligible for certain benefits, including housing and SNAP. Employment options are limited and employers can look down upon skills that might have been learned during the period of incarceration.

Incarcerated women can also face such basic barriers during their time of incarceration, such as the need for feminine hygiene products and bras.

A formerly incarcerated woman living at Guest House described the barriers to housing she faces: “I have trouble getting into places (housing) because of my criminal record. It’s been my criminal record or my credit. Going to jail caused my student loans to go to collections...It’s still affecting me right now because it’s causing me not to be able to get housing.” As for employment, she described her experiences working a short stint with a local restaurant. “They see that I could work and a couple of weeks later I do all their paperwork and they message me and say, sorry, your background check came back and we can’t hire you.”

While the number of women in Virginia’s prisons has typically been low, the number has jumped dramatically in the past few years. From 2009 to 2015, the state’s prison population grew by 11 men, while the number of women grew by 333 – to a total of 3,236 women in Virginia’s prisons.¹²² The CFW does not have information on the reasons for this increasing number of incarcerated women, however it is a disturbing trend that warrants further attention.

Women are more likely to be non-violent offenders. In addition, women who are incarcerated are often the sole parent to a young child or children, are often victims of violence or abuse (90 percent are survivors of trauma) and may face mental health issues or addiction recovery.¹²³

Friends of Guest House and Together We Bake

Friends of Guest House is an example of a full-service transition program for women that has achieved great success by following a “gender responsive and trauma-informed approach” that recognizes that women who have been incarcerated are dealing with different issues than men. For the past four decades, the Alexandria-based program has helped more than 3,000 women successfully reenter the community after incarceration.

With these issues in mind, Friends of Guest House serves their clients through a Residential-to-Aftercare program continuum, Workforce and Life Development Program and a non-residential Outreach Program. These programs are rooted in a, “five pillars of liveability framework,” with a focus on meeting healthcare needs, employment needs, education needs, housing needs, and reconnecting clients with children and families.

As a result, Friends of Guest House graduates have a less than ten percent reoffend rate, compared to 70 percent of ex-offenders nationwide who reoffend within two years.¹²⁴ By helping women transition successfully from incarceration, Friends of Guest House has impacted the lives of 4,000 children and countless families throughout the Alexandria community.

As one former resident of Guest House described her experience, “I think the programs are there to help because they really do. They really do. You feel like people care. It also teaches you different ways to deal with things. It teaches you a different way to deal with relationships, because relationships are often people’s biggest problems. Past traumas are problems. Jail does not address those issues. You’re never going to grow as a person if you don’t address those things.”

The CFW has been a longtime supporter of the Friends of Guest House program. Recently, the CFW successfully advocated to the Virginia Department of Corrections for an expansion of the Friends of Guest House residential program from three to six months.

Likewise, Together We Bake, another local program, increases the skills of formerly incarcerated women and assists with job placement. Together We Bake provides hands-on training and develops workforce-readiness skills that highlight the importance of punctuality, attendance, cooperation, and teamwork. The program offers participants employment-ready certification. Ninety percent of Together We Bake graduates

“It teaches you a different way to deal with relationships, because relationships are often people’s biggest problems. Past traumas are problems. Jail does not address those issues. You’re never going to grow as a person if you don’t address those things.” – *Friends of Guest House Resident*

earn the ServSafe certification, which allows for preferential hiring, a higher starting salary, and opportunities for supervisory positions. In short, Together We Bake aims to give women the chance to be successful in the workplace.¹²⁵

On a policy level, Alexandria acted to make transition from jail and prison to employment possible through the “ban the box” policy approved in 2014.¹²⁶ With this policy, inquiries regarding prior criminal history can only be made after a conditional offer of employment has been issued by the City. Recent research reveals however that ban the box policies might have unintended consequences.¹²⁷

In light of the increases in incarceration for women, more will need to be done to aid in the successful reintegration of women into the community and into employment.

Work-Life Balance

Workplace flexibility and leave policies have a major impact on workers’ abilities to maintain employment and increase earnings over time. This is particularly true for women, who often take the lead in caretaking responsibilities outside of the workplace. Without policies that allow a woman to take sick leave for an ill child, or to have leave after childbirth, or to work flexible hours because of child-care arrangements, many women cannot maintain employment. And when these policies are substandard, it can affect women’s ability to rise within a job and increase her earnings over time.

Indeed, within the city’s own workforce work-life balance is a concern. The CFW spoke with several high-level female city employees who noted that they have struggled with salary negotiations throughout their career, as well as maintaining a healthy balance between work and family. Employees pointed out that Alexandria is notorious for the number of evening

meetings that are held, which presents an extra challenge for both City staff and elected officials who are caregivers of parents, children, or other family members.

Paid Leave Policies

Paid leave related to childbirth has positive effects for workers and employers. According to IWPR, first-time mothers who utilized paid leave were 26.3 percent less likely to quit their jobs and were 18.2 percent more likely to work for the same employer after the birth of their first child.¹²⁸

It is well-documented that the nation lags behind other developed countries in paid leave supports for workers, including parental leave and/or family leave, and flexible policies that allow workers to balance work and personal/family responsibilities. This is particularly true for low-wage workers; 4 percent of the lowest earners have paid family leave benefits compared to 23 percent of the highest earning workers.¹²⁹

In Alexandria, the City recently approved a new paid parental leave benefit for City employees.¹³⁰ In addition, Governor Ralph Northam recently signed an executive order authorizing eight weeks of paid parental leave for employees of executive branch state agencies.¹³¹ The CFW commends these actions as important steps for increasing women’s economic security.

The CFW hopes that the City will serve as a model for ACPS, which currently does not offer parental leave. ACPS does allow employees to utilize short-term disability for pregnancy and the postpartum period. However, employees must pay a fee for the benefit and are only paid a percentage of their salary for a designated amount of time.¹³² It is the CFW’s hope that the new paid parental leave benefits by the city and state governments will encourage private employers in Alexandria, and ACPS, to adopt similar policies.

Virginia does not currently have protections for pregnant women to ensure that they get reasonable accommodations while pregnant, which can help ensure women are not asked to take leave or experience difficulties performing their job duties.

One of the largest employers in Alexandria is the federal government, including the U.S. Patent Office and the U.S. Department of Defense. Most federal employees are eligible for leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for purposes that include the birth or adoption of a child. The leave also covers care for a spouse, child, or parent with a medical condition.¹³³ Full-time City and ACPS employees are also eligible for unpaid leave under FMLA.

Unfortunately, the CFW does not have data on paid leave or other workplace flexibilities for private employers throughout the city — outside of the City government, ACPS and the federal government. Such data is not collected by Alexandria's Economic Development Partnership. The CFW is concerned about the lack of data on leave and benefit policies of major private employers in Alexandria because these policies impact the economic security and wellbeing of women and families.

It should be noted that many women who work part-time and are underemployed do not qualify for these benefits. Nationwide, women make up 64 percent of part-time workers, nearly half of whom are of childbearing age.¹³⁴ Low-income women are more likely to work part-time.¹³⁵

Pregnancy Discrimination

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act is a federal statute that guarantees the right not to be treated adversely because of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, and the right to be treated as well as other employees “not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work.”¹³⁶

In addition, the Virginia Human Rights Act bans pregnancy discrimination, and covers workers in workplaces with one or more employees. However, employees can only sue under the Human Rights Act if they have been fired because of their pregnancy, and their employer has more than five and fewer than 15 employees.¹³⁷

Virginia does not currently have protections for pregnant women to ensure that they get reasonable accommodations while pregnant, which can help ensure women are not asked to take leave or experience difficulties performing their job duties. Currently 16 states and six cities have passed reasonable accommodation laws for pregnant women.¹³⁸

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on sex, which is prohibited by federal, state and local law. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature are behaviors that might constitute sexual harassment if they are used to sexually coerce or create a hostile work environment.¹³⁹

Sexual harassment violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion, and it applies to employers with 15 or more employees, including federal, state, and local governments.¹⁴⁰

Victims of sexual harassment in the City of Alexandria are referred to the Alexandria Police Department and the City's Sexual Assault Center. The APD and SAC can then refer sexual harassment victims to the Office of Human Rights. The Office of Human Rights can investigate sexual harassment in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The Office on Human Rights provides community outreach and trainings, but has seen funding cuts to outreach in recent years. The Office of Human Rights also notifies the City Manager if there are any significant developments in its work, such as multiple complaints against the same respondent.¹⁴¹

In City Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, Alexandria's Office of Human Rights filed 13 formal sexual harassment charges. The Office of Human Rights receives far more contact and conducts more intakes than the number of cases officially

filed.¹⁴² Many resolutions to these cases are confidential, but outcomes can include settlement agreements, monetary relief or targeted equitable relief, such as a policy change, training, or job placement.

The Office of Human Rights reports that they assisted in the resolution of a case in 2018 that resulted in substantial monetary compensation for the victim; sexual harassment can have quite detrimental effects on victims' lifetime earnings.

Transportation

Transportation impacts employment options and overall quality of life. While more than half of Alexandrians drive to work, another 22 percent use public transportation such as DASH, Metrobus, Metrorail, and the King Street Trolley.¹⁴³ Also, 10 percent of Alexandrians are “captive” users of public transport; they must rely on public transportation or walking because they do not have access to a vehicle.¹⁴⁴

For captive riders, public transportation and pedestrian access is critical for getting to and from and thus maintaining employment. The CFW does not have access to statistics on average commute times using public bus systems, but

based on DASH schedules, it takes about 35 minutes to get from the West End (Edsall Rd. and Whiting St.) to Old Town (King St. and Washington St.) for a morning commute. This is five minutes longer than the mean travel time to work for Alexandrians, 30.8 minutes in 2015, according to the 2015 American Community Survey.

Moreover, if child-care access is factored into this travel time, families commuting from the West End to Old Town could easily spend two hours in transit each day. Currently, there are 83 child-care centers in the city – with only one located at a job site (the U.S. Patent and Trademark office). Substantial preschool and child care capacity is located in neighborhoods east of Quaker Lane whereas the majority of children live in the West End of the city.

It is not surprising, then, that city staff cite transportation as a major barrier for families trying to access child care. Staff also cite walking as a primary method for low-income families to access child care. Pedestrian accessibility, and all the factors that enhance or reduce it -- intersects with economic security for these families, a topic explored in more depth later in this report.

Healthcare

In May, Virginia's General Assembly passed Medicaid expansion after five years of fights and a lot of discussion.¹⁴⁵ CNBC reported that nearly 2 million Americans file for bankruptcy each year due to unpaid healthcare bills, making healthcare the number one cause of bankruptcy, and outpacing filings due to credit-card bills or unpaid mortgages.¹⁴⁶

Alexandria is not immune from the long-standing national problem of limited access to affordable, quality healthcare. In the city, 14 percent of the population lacks health insurance.¹⁴⁷ Broken down by gender, women fare slightly better than men with 12 percent of women and 14 percent of men without health insurance.¹⁴⁸ (Seven percent of Alexandria's children do not have health insurance.¹⁴⁹)

With the passage of Medicaid expansion in Virginia, 400,000 Virginians may become eligible for healthcare coverage.¹⁵⁰ While Medicaid expansion will help alleviate challenges, more work is needed in the area of healthcare. Much of the country has implemented strategies and seen a decline in incidences of HIV and breast cancer, however Alexandria has not seen declines. Furthermore, the mental health and psychological wellbeing of young women and girls is a concern.

Access to Care a Priority

While Medicaid expansion was approved in Virginia, there are still questions remaining about how this policy change will impact women and girls in Alexandria. Medicaid expansion

could bring a \$2 billion annual increase for the state economy, yet there may be local costs and other issues associated with increased demand for public health services.¹⁵¹ There is currently a Medicaid expansion workgroup comprising DCHS staff and community partners that is working to ensure the highest levels of screening during the open enrollment period. At this point, the full impact of Medicaid expansion on city staff and resources is unknown.

In addition, the needs of undocumented immigrants, who won't be covered by Medicaid expansion, must be addressed. Current estimates project that 59 percent of Virginia's approximately 132,000 undocumented immigrants do not have health insurance.¹⁵²

Moreover, Alexandria's Community Health Improvement Plan for 2014-2019 — a collaborative effort between the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria, the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) and other community partners and stakeholders to put forth a plan for equitable health outcomes in the city — made access to care a priority area, with the goal of increasing the proportion of Alexandria adults with healthcare coverage by 5 percent by 2019.¹⁵³ Community partners are working toward this goal by collaborating with Insurance Navigators to educate and enroll residents in insurance programs under the Affordable Care Act, working with the INOVA Hospital system to integrate residents into their Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly program, implementing Medicaid expansion,

and developing other recommendations for addressing health insurance coverage gaps.¹⁵⁴

Neighborhood Health Cares for the City's Uninsured

Many of those who are uninsured utilize Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services Inc. (ANHSI),¹⁵⁵ a local community health provider, and the Carpenter's Shelter Clinic¹⁵⁶ for their health needs. The CFW conducted an in-depth review of the services and care available at ANHSI over the past year to learn more about the needs of Alexandria's uninsured women and girls.

ANHSI treated 2,957 women and 1,644 girls in 2017 with 64 percent of the women and 20 percent of the girls being uninsured.¹⁵⁷ The predominant health issues for the women and girls seen included obesity and related illnesses — 133 girls (8 percent) and 1,388 women (47 percent) were diagnosed with obesity — as well as depression and other mood disorders. In addition, ANHSI treated 173 girls and 172 women with asthma.¹⁵⁸

The most common services provided to women and girls included immunizations, flu vaccines, pap tests, contraceptive management and childhood lead screening. Neighborhood Health referred 1,455 women for mammograms; 66 percent of these women were uninsured. Of these women, 127 had

Health Data for Women (18+) by Geography

Sources: CDC Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), courtesy of multiple CDC data tools; mortality data from CDC Wonder database; "average number of days" data for Virginia retrieved from IWPR 2015 Status of Women in the States, Chapter 6 (which references the BRFSS); HIV data from CDC Atlas

*Italicized fonts indicate a similar indicator examined to enable comparison at local level.

Indicator	National	Virginia	Alexandria	Arlington	Years for CDC data
Avg. Annual Heart Disease Mortality Rate Among Women (per 100,000)	133.4	124.8	107.1	85.8	2013-2015 Avg.
Average Annual Lung Cancer Mortality Rate Among Women (per 100,000)	36.3	36.5	24.5	22.4	2010-2014 Avg.
Average Annual Breast Cancer Mortality Rate Among Women (per 100,000)	21.2	21.9	24.4	21	2010-2014 Avg.
<i>Diagnosed Diabetes Age-Adjusted Percentage of Women</i>	<i>8.2%</i>	<i>8.8%</i>	<i>6.7%</i>	<i>4.7%</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Obesity Age-Adjusted Percentage of Women</i>	<i>28.3%</i>	<i>27.3%</i>	<i>20.7%</i>	<i>15.8%</i>	<i>2013</i>
Average Number of Days per Month of Limited Activities Among Women		4.7			2013
HIV Prevalence (per 100,000) among Women	169.7	158.8	362.9	166.4	2015
Suicides (Injury Intent, per 100,000) for Women	2.3	5.5	4.7	4.5	2007-2016, inclusive
Suicides (Injury Intent)	87351	2344	36	53	2007-2016, inclusive

a positive screening. ANHSI also offered a range of family planning services.¹⁵⁹

Health Status of Alexandria’s Women and Girls

For the purposes of this report, the CFW assessed the health status of women and girls in Alexandria using public sources and compared them to nine key indicators identified by the IWPR 2015 Report on the Status of Women. These nine indicators cover chronic disease, sexual health, mental health and physical health. They include mortality rates from heart disease, breast cancer and lung cancer; incidence of diabetes, chlamydia and AIDS; average number of days per month that mental health is reported as not good; average number of days per month that activities were limited due to health status; and suicide mortality rates.¹⁶⁰

However, it should be noted that a fuller, more complete picture of the health status of women and girls in Alexandria

will emerge a year from now when the AHD completes its comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA), a grassroots effort launched in April 2018 that aims to identify key health issues and concerns for the people of Alexandria.¹⁶¹ The CFW is an active participant in this effort and views this report as a starting point to help inform and guide the CHA process.

Top Health Issues

According to the CFW’s assessment, the main health issues impacting women and girls in the city include breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, and obesity and its related illnesses. Alexandria’s high breast cancer and HIV/AIDS rates are particularly troubling because, according to IWPR’s 2015 report, women’s mortality rates from breast cancer, heart disease and lung cancer, have decreased over the past decade at the national level, as have their incidence rates of HIV/AIDS. In addition, while both mental health and obesity seem to be significant emerging issues in Alexandria and across the nation, more information is needed to determine how they impact women specifically.

IWPR State Data by Race, with Comparable Alexandria Indicators

Source: Virginia Data from IWPR 2015 Report. Alexandria data from Health Matters

Indicator	VA	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Native Am.	Year
Heart Disease Mortality (18+)	128.3	126.3	65.2	157.7	58.4		2011-2013 avg.
Lung Cancer Mortality rate (18+)	36.5	38.8	11.5	35.3	15.1		2011-2013 avg.
Breast Cancer Mortality rate per 100,000 (18+)	21.7	20.7	10.7	30.5	9.5		2011-2013 avg.
Percent of women 18 and over who have ever been told they have diabetes (2013)	10%	10%	5%	16%	5%	10%	2013
Overweight & Obese (Percent of women with BMI of 25 or greater)	58%	54%	55%	74%	31%	63%	2013
Average Number of Days per Month of Poor Mental Health Among Women (18+)	3.8	3.7	3.2	3.7	3.6	8.8	2013

Breast Cancer

From 2011-2015, the breast cancer mortality rate was 23.7 per 100,000 women in Alexandria,¹⁶² while the breast cancer incidence rate was 118.7 per 100,000 women.¹⁶³ This mortality rate is slightly higher than the national and state rates, at 20.9 and 21.8 respectively.¹⁶⁴

In Alexandria, as is the case across the nation, black women are more likely to die from breast cancer than white women. From 2011 to 2015, the mortality rate for black women in Alexandria was 31.3 per 100,000 women, compared to a rate of 20.8 for white women.¹⁶⁵ The national trend is equally as disturbing. Despite similar incidence rates, black women are 42 percent more likely to die from breast cancer than white women.¹⁶⁶

Prevention and early detection are key when it comes to treating breast cancer.¹⁶⁷ The CFW operates the Vola Lawson Breast Cancer Fund, established in memory of former city manager and community activist Vola Lawson. The Fund has helped 8,000 uninsured and underinsured Alexandria women receive free mammograms and other diagnostic screenings since its inception.¹⁶⁸ The CFW is proud to have sponsored a mobile mammogram screening at the Well Ray Del Ray health fair on June 23, 2018.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control's (CDC) national health target, known as Healthy People 2020, aims to increase the proportion of women ages 50-74 who receive a biannual breast cancer screening by ten percent, which would be 81.1 percent of women in that age range.¹⁶⁹ According to the CDC's data, Alexandria had already exceeded this goal in 2014, with 81.4 percent of women between the ages of 50-74 having undergone a mammogram in the past two years.¹⁷⁰ The CDC recommends talking with a doctor to determine individual risk and need for screening for women ages 40-49.

HIV/AIDS

The number of women living with HIV/AIDS in Alexandria is 363 per 100,000 women.¹⁷¹ This rate is higher than in surrounding jurisdictions in Virginia.¹⁷² African American women are disproportionately affected by HIV compared to women of other races/ethnicities.¹⁷³ Heterosexual contact and injection drug use accounted for nearly all of new HIV diagnoses among women, nationally, in 2016.¹⁷⁴

In keeping with national statistics, more men are living with HIV in Alexandria than women. According to representatives of the AHD HIV/AIDS team, who sponsored the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Symposium held in February 2018 at

the Alleyne AME Zion Church, Alexandria's new cases of HIV — averaging 30 a year since 2014 — are primarily from black men who have sex with men.¹⁷⁵

CHIP identified HIV/AIDS prevention and care as a priority, with a goal of increasing HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention and reducing the rate of new HIV cases identified in Alexandria by 5 percent.¹⁷⁶ The Alexandria Commission on HIV/AIDS¹⁷⁷ is a key partner in an ongoing effort to increase public awareness of local HIV/AIDS organizations who provide services and integrate HIV/AIDS prevention education into existing education curricula.

The AHD provides free walk-in services for HIV/AIDS including rapid testing and counseling at both its King Street location, the Casey Clinic, and the Teen Wellness Center at T.C. Williams High School.¹⁷⁸ According to the 2016-2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted by the ACPS and the AHD, fewer high school students reported being tested for HIV in 2016 than in 2014.¹⁷⁹

Mental Health

Current research suggests that women are 40 percent more likely than men to develop depression, and twice as likely to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.¹⁸⁰ In addition, a new report from the CDC shows that the rate of suicide for women, which has traditionally been lower than men, has doubled since 2000.¹⁸¹ The reasons behind this are still largely unknown, but the prevalence of mental health issues for women and girls points to an ever-increasing need to provide specific and targeted services for women and girls, while working to reduce stigma around mental health issues.

In Alexandria, the City's Community Services Board (CSB), a group of 12 volunteers appointed by the city council to oversee public funds used to provide mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services through the City's Department of Community and Human Services, provided mental health services to 408 girls, ages 17 and under, and 1,500 women over the age of 18 over the past year.¹⁸²

Overall, 2014 data show that 21 percent of adults in Alexandria had five days or more in the last month when they reported their mental health was not good, and 9.2 percent had 14 or more days when they reported their mental health was not good. This is roughly in line with statewide data that shows that 23 percent of adults had 1 to 7 days when mental health was not good and 19 percent had 8 to 30 days when mental health was not good.¹⁸³

For people of all ages, the national suicide rate rose by 25 percent between 1999 and 2014.¹⁸⁴ Among women, the highest increases in suicide rates were found for non-

Current research suggests that women are 40 percent more likely than men to develop depression.

Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Natives, at an 89 percent increase, and for non-Hispanic white females, at a 60 percent increase.¹⁸⁵ The rate of attempted suicide by women in Alexandria — at 4.7 per 100,000 women from 2007 to 2016 -- was above the national average of 2.3 per 100,000 women, and below the state average of 5.5 per 100,000 women.¹⁸⁶

CHIP made addressing the social stigma of mental illness a priority with a goal of increasing participation in community events and outreach by 20 percent.¹⁸⁷

Girls and Mental Health

Due in large part to the 2016-2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, there is extensive information about mental health issues for girls in Alexandria, and the results are quite sobering. In the eighth grade, 21 percent of girls made a plan for committing suicide -- compared to 7 percent of boys. That number was lower for girls in grades 10 and 12 — 14 percent made a plan for suicide — although still double the number for boys.¹⁸⁸ In 2016, 5.5 percent of girls in grades 10 and 12 attempted suicide, compared to 2.7 percent of boys. The number of girls attempting and committing suicide is alarming.

ACAP Coordinator, Lisette Torres, also cited mental health as an underlying factor for teen pregnancy and substance abuse. ACAP is working with girls with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and lack of self-esteem.

Obesity

While the overall rate of Alexandria adults with obesity at 26 percent is lower than the state and national averages,¹⁸⁹ this rate has continued to increase over the past several years. Obesity was a top issue for women treated at ANHSI where nearly half of those seen in 2017, and 8 percent of the girls, were considered obese.¹⁹⁰

In addition, 26 percent of children in Northern Virginia are obese, and that number increases to 43.5 percent for Alexandria children ages 2 to 5.¹⁹¹ This issue is particularly prevalent among Hispanic children — 33 percent are overweight or obese — and children with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level — 30 percent are overweight or obese.¹⁹²

Alexandria's CHIP includes healthy eating and active living as a priority area, with a goal of increasing the proportion of Alexandria residents who are at a healthy weight by 10 percent.¹⁹³

The Alexandria Childhood Obesity Action Network is working to address the growing obesity epidemic among children through policy and community change. Many of their key initiatives impact both children and their families — from ensuring that everyone has access to a quality playground and piloting a program for food stamps at the city's farmers markets to breastfeeding promotion and an assessment of how the emergency food system provides healthy food.

As part of this effort, the state legislature recently approved a bill that would count recess as instructional time to increase the amount of time school children spend in recess.¹⁹⁴ ACPS subsequently increased the allowable amount of recess time in the school day from 20 to 30 minutes.¹⁹⁵

Opioid Abuse

Opioid abuse is a nationwide health epidemic, and Alexandria is no exception. Admissions from opioid overdoses at Inova Alexandria Hospital rose close to 20 percent from 2015 to 2016, and more than 40 percent from 2016 to 2017.¹⁹⁶ About half of the patients admitted for opioid overdoses were women.¹⁹⁷ In August 2018, seven opioid overdoses occurred in just one week's time. One fatality resulted and three of the victims shared that they did not realize they were taking opioids. Overall, there has been an increase in fiscal year 2018 for the number of patients who have sought treatment from the Alexandria Residential Treatment Center.¹⁹⁸

In Alexandria, the death rate from opioid overdose was 4.5 deaths per 100,000 people in 2016.¹⁹⁹ From 2007 and 2016, there were a total of 82 deaths from opioid overdose, including 37 women.²⁰⁰ Statewide, the death rate is nearly double, at 13.7 per 100,000 people.²⁰¹

This year, the City's Opioid Work Group hosted a town hall focusing on the local impact of the national opioid crisis as well as a community action planning meeting to discuss local efforts on prevention and education, treatment, overdose response and recovery, diversion and supply reduction, and law enforcement.²⁰²

In recent years, the City's treatment program — one of four statewide that's run by a local government — has sought to maintain its service capacity by stabilizing staffing.²⁰³ City leaders approved funding toward this end in fiscal year 2019, funding two additional therapist positions for the Opioid Treatment Program as well as allocating \$100,000 in contingent funds for a city-wide Opioid and Other Addictions Coordinator to implement initiatives developed by the Opioid Work Group.

In addition, the City, in partnership with the state, a local non-profit and the Alexandria Health Department has offered free Naloxone to the public as well as the REVIVE! Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education program, a 90-minute training that teaches participants how to recognize symptoms and respond to an opioid overdose.

The growing opioid epidemic is said to be contributing to the growing number of women in jail. Many women who are addicted to opioids turn to opioids because of past trauma, sexual abuse, or sex trafficking according to Friends of Guest House.

Family Planning and Maternal Health/Prenatal Care

In 1974, the demand for a weekly and biweekly city-run family planning clinic was so high that appointments had to be made three weeks in advance. Fortunately, there are more services available today. Currently, the Health Department's clinic on King Street offers counseling and testing, basic gynecological exams, birth control methods and healthy pregnancy promotion by fees based on income. Abortion is available at privately run clinics in Alexandria.

For low-income and uninsured women and girls who are pregnant in Alexandria, there is prenatal care available at the Casey Health Center. In addition, prenatal care is available through FAMIS MOMS, an income-based state program that provides comprehensive care during pregnancy and two months after birth. In 2013, 70 percent of pregnant women in Alexandria received prenatal care. This is below the national and state percentages, at 74 and 83 percent respectively, and below the Healthy People 2020 national health target of 77.9 percent.²⁰⁴

The issue of maternal health and prenatal care was dire in 1974. According to the Commission's report, the Health Department had no obstetricians, most prenatal and postpartum care was offered only by private physicians, and many women had to contend with inadequate insurance benefits for pregnancy and childbirth. While things have

improved since then, more progress is needed in accessing prenatal care.

In addition, maternal mortality is a major issue for black women in Virginia where more than three times the number of black women are dying in or near childbirth, as compared to any other race.²⁰⁵ This issue is not unique to Virginia. Nationwide, black women died at a rate of 47.2 per 100,000 births in 2016, while white women died at 18.1, with Latina and Asian women registering even lower rates. In fact, overall, the U.S. has the worst rate of maternal deaths in the developed world.²⁰⁶

A review board in Virginia has found that a major cause of maternal deaths here is postpartum hypertension. Other leading causes include hemorrhages, cardiomyopathy, infections and general high blood pressure.²⁰⁷ The CFW does not have data on maternal mortality rates in Alexandria.

Teen Pregnancy

Alexandria's teen pregnancy rate of 12.6 pregnancies per 1,000 teen girls remains among the highest in the region and the state.²⁰⁸ This rate has declined over the past 15 years — thanks in part to efforts of the AHD and the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP), which pulls together city agencies, community groups, and residents to raise awareness and provide resources and support. Yet, the rate is still high among Latina teens according to the AHD.

Teen pregnancy is also high among 18-19 year olds. ACAP provides services to these older teens, but sees challenges in reaching this age range, particularly since a partner organization, a women's program and clinic at Northern Virginia Community College, lost federal funding and had to close its doors.

Alexandria teens have access to free and confidential medical services at the Teen Wellness Center, located at T.C. Williams High School. The center provides physical exams, immunization treatment, birth control, pregnancy testing, HIV/AIDS and STD testing as well as mental health and substance abuse services and pediatric services for teen parents.

Alexandria's Teen Wellness Center is one of more than 2,000 school-based health centers nationwide, and it is among the 37 percent that distribute contraceptives.²⁰⁹

In an interview for this report, ACAP Coordinator Lisette Torres pointed out that recent reductions in Title X funding, which funds family planning clinics, will have an impact on certain services available at the Teen Wellness Center.

Leadership

Women not as Prevalent at the Highest Levels

Women have a growing presence in City government, yet elected positions at the highest levels are still primarily filled by men. There have never been more than three women concurrently on the city council. Currently, the city council has two women serving: Mayor Allison Silberberg and Councilwoman Redella S. “Del” Pepper, who has been a council member since 1985. Two new female candidates will join Councilwoman Pepper in January 2018, but the incoming mayor will be one of the two men currently vying for election to that position. The first female mayor was elected in 1991 — 18 years after women began serving on the city council. It should be noted, that in 2012 there were 8 female candidates for city council, but only two women (Silberberg and Pepper) were elected.²¹⁰

At the state level, only one of the five state legislators who represent the people of Alexandria is a woman. In elections for Commonwealth’s Attorney, Sheriff and Clerk of the Circuit Court, there have been no women candidates in the past decade.²¹¹ In fact, Virginia has consistently been a state with one of the lowest number of women serving in public office. In 2015, Virginia was ranked 47th.²¹² This began to change in the historic 2017 election. More women than ever were elected to the Virginia General Assembly — taking 38 out of 140 seats, for 27 percent of the total. This was a 10 percent increase from

the number of women elected to the state’s legislative body in 2014 — 11 men were replaced by women. Among these women legislators were the first Latinas, the first transgender individual, the first lesbian and the first Asian-American woman to be elected to the general assembly.²¹³

In City government, women have made gains in representation, making up 39 percent of the eight boards and commissions required by city code — the Board of Architectural Review (Parker-Gray District and Old and Historic District), Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Community Services Board, Real Estate Assessments Board, Sanitation Authority and Building Code Board of Appeals.²¹⁴ However, only two of those boards and commissions are chaired by women.²¹⁵ In 1974, less than one-quarter of the members of the 17 main boards and commissions were women, including the school board.²¹⁶

Alexandria’s nine-member school board has had four to five women members for the past decade. However, it is interesting to note that while many women do campaign for school board²¹⁷ — eight to ten candidates per election for the past ten years — and many do get elected, they do not seek higher office.

Politics is Still a Man’s Game

There are many factors that impact women’s ability to run for and hold public office. One former female school board member talked about why politics still seems to be a man’s game. In an

Well-documented nationwide, women who run for office may encounter everything from sexual harassment to threats to their safety on the campaign trail.

interview with a member of the CFW, she noted that part of the problem is that because women are largely new to public office there is no established group (formal or informal) of elected women to provide mentoring and other support to interested candidates. Fundraising is especially difficult for women who may not have the extensive networks or who may have been taught not to ask for things for themselves.

Women also have lower earnings than men, making it more difficult to potentially reduce work hours for serving in public office. Women are also more likely to shoulder larger family life responsibilities. Night time meetings and frequent events raise scheduling and caregiving challenges for women with children, especially lower-income women and single mothers.

In addition, cultural and societal norms still have an impact on whether women seek office. From a young age, women and girls are taught to wait their turn, or prioritize others over themselves. Women are taught to put family obligations first, and personal ambitions second.

Moreover, women face threats and misogyny while campaigning. Well-documented nationwide, women who run for office may encounter everything from sexual harassment to threats to their safety on the campaign trail. Violent, offensive, and misogynistic messages can run rampant on social media. These problems are compounded for women of color and can impact a woman's decision to run for office.²¹⁸

To assist in overcoming some of these barriers, grassroots organizations have begun to recruit and train women to run for office. These include, but are not limited to:

- She Should Run
- EMILY's List
- National Women's Political Caucus
- Women's Campaign Fund

- Women's Campaign School
- Ignite
- VoteRunLead
- Victory Institute
- National Federation of Republican Women

Emerge America, founded in 2005, seeks to increase the number of Democratic women leaders from diverse backgrounds in public office through recruitment, training, and providing a powerful network.²¹⁹ Running Start, a non-partisan organization, founded in 2007, seeks to educate young women and girls early in life to transform the makeup of political leaders nationwide.²²⁰ The National Federation of Republican Women, one of the largest and long-standing grassroots organizations seeks to recruit, training and elect women republican candidates.²²¹ The list of organizations that train, educate, and mentor women interested in elected office continues to grow.

The CFW is excited to see the ways in which more formal training, networking, support and resources may impact women's ability to run and hold public office. While women have come a long way, there is still work to be done to change the fact that the political system largely benefits men.

Women's Voices in Decision-Making

Leadership extends beyond running for public office or serving as an elected official. Women are involved in leading community initiatives in organizations and informal groups across the city, as well as impacting change on the neighborhood level.

Women's Leadership Group in Arlandria

Recently, George Mason University engaged in a community based participatory research project with Latina women living in Arlandria. These women were natural leaders in the community and formed a community advisory board, Amigas de la Comunidad, as part of the community-based research process. Their mission states, "We are a group of women working together for the improvement and well-being of our families and community."

Priorities for these women include child and family well-being, employment, housing, hunger, deportation, family separation, bullying in schools, and gang violence.

Amigas de la Comunidad assisted with a community survey of 115 Latina immigrants. They found that their community members have:

- lived in the US for an average of 10 years
- 35 percent speak some English
- 50 percent had completed sixth grade level or less of education
- 54 percent are employed, mostly as child care providers, in a restaurant or as a housekeeper
- median wages were \$9.50 per hour
- 58 percent have trouble meeting monthly expenses
- nearly 80 percent worry about not having enough food

This survey has helped Amigas de la Comunidad and their partners at George Mason University get a first-hand look into the lives of women in Arlandria. They have transitioned from the survey to working on family reunification, emergency assistance, and deportation protection.

The voices and perspectives of Amigas de la Comunidad would be valuable for planning and decision-making in Alexandria government. While they and other women in these communities may have difficulty scheduling time to participate in the City's community forums, their voices are still valuable and their leadership impactful. Different avenues for the city to gain insight from such leaders should be explored.

These voices are integral to the well-being of the community. It is incumbent upon city leaders and staff to integrate the

perspectives and experiences of women in these communities into the city's planning and decision-making processes. This type of on the ground, inclusive, community outreach is exemplified in the work of Katie Leonard, a Public Health Planner at the AHD, who stated in an interview for this report: "My goal right now is to get out and talk to people where they are, (people) that aren't coming to meetings and aren't necessarily engaged, and just having those real conversations. So just talking to them and tracking themes, my goal is to be able to link them to the resources that are available here."

Gender in Budgeting and Policy Solutions

The policies, programs, and decisions made at the city government level can impact men and women, as well as transgender people, in different ways. In order to understand how city government choices and decisions are impacting people of different genders, they must be assessed and examined for their implications to people within and across genders. This is called using a gender lens.

Right now, the City is in the early stages of evaluating public policy through a racial equality lens. With an interdepartmental work group created following a presentation from the National League of Cities and a pilot program underway, applying the racial equality lens is a vitally important step toward advancing racial equality in Alexandria.

To combat discrimination -- intended or otherwise -- and to best serve the residents of Alexandria, City budgets, workforce practices, and policy decisions must be examined with a gender lens. The CFW hopes and anticipates that application of a gender lens will follow on the current efforts to integrate a racial equity lens in city government right now.

A Gender Lens on Transportation & Development

Transportation infrastructure is a major priority for the city government. The ways in which transportation infrastructure is used can differ by gender. And women and men's experiences with public transportation can also be quite different.

For example, women are more likely to make multiple stops, such as to and from child care, in addition to using public transportation to reach their jobs. When accessing child care,

women bring children onto public transportation. Children need longer walking times to cross intersections on the way to the bus and on the way to child care. Women might also utilize a stroller to get children to the bus stop, which can present difficult challenges when entering the bus. The child must get out of the stroller (very young children must be held at this point), strollers must be folded up and placed in a secure location while paying fare, carrying personal items, and ushering children onto the bus. The difficulties of bus travel with children fall heavily on women in areas of the city without Metro access, namely Arlandria and certain neighborhoods in the West End.

Women face more sexual harassment and violence in public transportation than do men. Participants in CFW focus groups reported that they were often uncomfortable walking from a bus stop to their homes at night after work. Gender differences in safety concerns must be taken into account when determining bus stop location and lighting. The level of crowding on a bus or metro can impact personal safety for women. Predictability in scheduling can assist women in not needing to wait longer than necessary at a bus stop, which again, can be an unsafe experience. Also, awareness about reporting sexual harassment and/or violence on public transportation, and the ease in which incidents can be reported, can impact women's experiences on public transit.

Despite the unique needs of women with different modes of transport, the CFW is not aware that women's voices are particularly sought after or considered in transportation planning initiatives. Certainly, the CFW has not been requested to provide insight or advice in the realm of transportation planning. Women's experiences need to be recognized in transportation planning.

Additional City planning efforts can be improved by applying a gender lens — including housing development design and the placement of key amenities.

For example, best practices in multi-family housing design for families recommends garden style apartments and creating family size and affordable units on the first three floors of a building. That provides greater ease for parents to supervise children who are playing outside of the unit. These lower level units should have balconies or windows overlooking the outdoor space where children would play. Housing developments planned according to these and similar principles have greatest benefit for caregivers and children, and single parents in particular.

Areas of the city with high densities of children should have easy pedestrian access to child care, schools, play space,

libraries, and recreation centers, among other family-centered amenities. Such development would allow the city to model as one of the country's most innovative, attractive, and family friendly cities. Such practice would also fall in line with the City's existing Playspace Policy and goals of linking families with recreation centers and would greatly increase the quality of life for women and families in the city.

Leadership and the Former Office on Women

In 2010, at the time that DCHS integrated staff members and programs from the Office on Women (OOW), the OOW employed 21 staff members. These included full time, part time, and contract employees, and did not include the consultant who assisted in organizing the Walk to Fight Breast Cancer. The OOW was responsible for several city programs, including:

- ACAP
- DVP
- Sexual Assault programming
- Victim Accompaniment and Legal Advocacy
- Counseling Services
- Sexual Harassment training for city staff
- LGBTQ Services
- Breast Cancer Awareness and Outreach
- Project StepOut
- Expect Respect

Programming and staff were reorganized under DCHS. Due to the funding cuts impacting OOW, some services were eliminated from the City's funding while some were maintained through the use of State and Federal grant programs. Notably, the Walk to Fight Breast Cancer started by Former City Manager Vola Lawson was permanently canceled due to these cuts. It took years to reestablish the efforts of the Walk to Fight Breast Cancer. The exhaustive process required establishing a separate fund, new partnerships, and agreements and concepts of operation to support women in need. Despite these changes, other programs have thrived under DCHS, with dedicated staff working under the guidance of the DCHS Director and other outstanding members in the Center for Children and Families.

However, several of the key functions of the OOW were lost in the transition of services to DCHS. These functions were namely:

- Director level leadership solely focused on the development and implementation of comprehensive policies, practices, and services on issues of particular importance to women.²²²
- The coordination of initiatives that particularly impact women across city departments and within multiple city departments.
- Forecasting future needs, funding, and strategic direction of services for women and girls.
- Guiding the CFW on a wide variety of topics and concerns for women in the city, providing administrative and mid-level staff support for CFW operations.
- Providing a signal to the community on the importance of women's equality and wellbeing within city government.

While leadership and staff at DCHS are fully committed to doing their best to attend to women and girls, they have a wide variety of responsibilities and cannot be asked to serve the roles described above in addition to their other charges.

Pay Equity and Representation in City Government

In 1974 the Alexandria Ad Hoc Committee on Women declared that “the city government, as an employer supported by public funds, should serve as an example to the rest of the community by providing equal opportunity to all its employees.” After the committee reported finding “strong evidence that the Alexandria city government has perpetuated discriminatory practices,” grounded in the fact that women were primarily hired as secretaries and never left their clerical positions.²²³ The City has come a long way in the past four decades for women in Alexandria government.

Today, the City has resources in place to help its workforce succeed and grow by improving their skills, education, and earnings. These resources include education assistance, in-person instruction, e-learning, rotating assignments and fellowships. The City also offers incentives for employees to develop leadership skills and paid time to pursue leadership and development opportunities. In addition, there are many organizations throughout the city that provide leadership training and opportunities for women and girls to tap into networking and mentoring opportunities.

Women make up nearly half of the City's workforce, and as of 2017, 45 percent of the top levels of the City workforce are

female.²²⁴ However, while substantial numbers of women work at the top levels of the city workforce, only 42 percent of employees receiving the highest-level executive pay scale are women.²²⁵

Pay Equity

In 2016 the city performed a pay equity analysis across the entire City workforce and found that on average, women made 96 cents for every dollar a man made (as compared to national gender pay gap for that year of 79 cents for every dollar).²²⁶

The CFW applauds the City's delve into pay equity within its workforce. This has been a top priority of the CFW for years and the 2016 analysis is a great step toward progress.

The following gaps as shown in City Human Resources data, still exist:

- Within the entire City workforce, African American women earn 76 percent of white men's earnings and Latinas earn 80 percent. On the contrary, white women earn 94 percent of white men's earnings and Asian women earn 99 percent.
- The wage gaps are larger for women who are age 65 and older. Professional women age 65 and older earn .82 for each dollar of men's pay.
- Certain job classifications within the workforce also face larger wage gaps such as technicians, who have a 10 percent wage gap on average and a 15 percent wage gap for those just before retirement age (55-64 years).
- Women in the Professionals job category, who have 0-3 years of employment, earn 86 percent of men's earnings with the same years of experience.
- While the wage gap is, on average, at a low level compared to national gender disparities in pay, on aggregate women have one more year of employment than men and still earn less.

These persistent disparities, evident on a more granular level than average wage calculations, need attention.

Representation in City Departments

In addition to wage disparities, women are also under-represented in several departments — including Public Safety where women make up 22 percent of the workforce — and over-represented in others — including Community and Human Services.²²⁷

Within the following City government units, women make up fewer than half of the workforce:

City Government Unit	Percent of employees who are women
General Services	15%
Transportation and Environmental Services	21%
Fire Department	22%
Information Technology	28%
Police	30%
Code Administration	35%
Department of Project Implementation	36%
Sheriff's Office	40%
Circuit Court Clerk	41%
Department of Recreation and Cultural Services	43%

Representation in Job Categories within City Workforce

There is only one Hispanic woman, two Asian women, and one woman who identifies as two or more races out of a total of 123 people (60 total women), within the highest paying job category, Officials and Administrators.

There are no women within the Craft Worker job category in Alexandria's workforce. Eighty-one men work within this job category, making an average salary of \$56,100. The City HR Department has established a goal of hiring more women within the Skilled Craft Workers job category, as of 2015.

Women make up only 29 percent of the protective services job category. Women's representation is lowest in the non-civilian portion of this category. Women make up only 20 percent of the

Service-Maintenance job category and the City HR Department has established a goal of hiring more women within this category, as of 2015.

Girls and Leadership

The CFW held a discussion about leadership and empowerment with a group of nine female high school students in Alexandria. These girls were leaders in their school, participated in school and community activities, and were motivated to succeed. While in no way is this group a representative sample of all of Alexandria's young women, they did provide important insight.

The CFW's discussion with these adolescent girls made clear that young women in this city lead busy lives. In addition to acting as volunteers with ACAP, these nine young women are involved in groups such as the Future Business Leaders of America, Muslim Student Alliance, Bryce Project and Building Better Futures, as well as sports such as track and cheer. They all shared that it would be too much to add anything else to their already-full plates; they feel sleep-deprived, stressed out and overloaded with homework, which takes up two to three hours per day, plus weekend days and school holidays.

Smart phones play a significant role in their lives. They are frequently on their phones in class and at home, using Facetime, group messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or playing games and texting. They got their first phones between the ages of 7 and 15. They don't believe cyberbullying is a problem for them. The girls stated that these issues were more prominent in middle school.

When asked about leadership, they said that they see girls acting as leaders in school. For example, they agreed that girls are more likely than boys to step up as group leaders for class projects. When it comes to who they emulate as leaders, most did not have a mentor themselves, although one young woman noted that she looked up to a Spanish teacher who impressed her with her ability to balance work, school, and life. Others watched empowerment videos for advice or looked up to celebrities such as Will Smith and Jackie Chan. They all agreed that adults seem to be going through a lot of things of their own and did not have time to act as their mentors. They don't feel like they spend enough time with their families.

When asked to define empowerment, they said that being empowered means feeling secure, being proud to be a woman while proactively working to uplift women in jobs and education. For each of them, maintaining good grades in school helped them to raise their self-esteem. They do feel competitive with each other — for example, when someone else gets a better grade, it impacts how they feel about themselves.

Safety

When Bronx civil rights activist Tarana Burke sat across from a sexual assault victim reliving the horrors perpetrated on her body in 1997, all she could think to say to the 13-year-old girl was, “Me Too.” At that moment, a movement was born. Today that movement has been catapulted to the forefront by reporting by such people as Jane Mayer, Jodi Kantor, Megan Twohey, and Ronan Farrow.

As one of the first cities in the nation to publicly fund a domestic violence program, women’s safety has always been one of Alexandria’s key priorities. Indeed, for more than 40 years, Alexandria has been a pioneer in providing services to address domestic violence and sexual assault. In 1985, the Commission’s report stated: “In the 10 years since the Ad Hoc Committee’s findings . . . the establishment of a Rape Victim Companion Program and a Battered Women’s Shelter are very prominent and successful accomplishments of the Alexandria Commission on the Status of Women.”²²⁸

Alexandria’s Sexual Assault Center and Domestic Violence Program

Today, the CFW is proud that the City’s services for women’s safety have continued to expand. Currently, the city’s Sexual Assault Center and Domestic Violence Program (SAC/DVP)

include a variety of educational, outreach, and awareness programs – such as the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP), a 24/7 hotline, a domestic violence shelter, legal help (including court accompaniment), a Sexual Assault Response Team, domestic violence and sexual assault survivor support groups, a children’s program, a Silent Witness Project, and the candlelight vigil.²²⁹

In addition, the City provides resources for stalking victims through its Family Service Specialist (FSS). The CFW is proud to have helped advocate, with City staff, to ensure that the FSS position is permanently funded. In addition to helping stalking victims, the FSS also provides essential services to domestic violence victims in non-arrest cases. A partnership with, and partners with Offender Aid and Restoration program to provide allows the program to provide support for batterers.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) partners with the Community Lodgings and ALIVE! House to provide transitional housing for survivors of domestic violence and their families. Some survivors also receive support through the state’s Rapid Rehousing Fund. There are also services that are offered for batterers through the DVIP.

While the City’s domestic violence and sexual assault programs are comprehensive, there are still services that need to be expanded, such as legal services and immigration support for survivors.

Indeed, for more than 40 years, Alexandria has been a pioneer in providing services to address domestic violence and sexual assault.

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Statistics

In 2016, the domestic violence hotline fielded 1,798 calls, the majority of which were from women calling about domestic violence. That number has remained constant since 2010. Also in 2016, a total of 526 adult victims of family violence were served by the City, up from 392 victims in 2010. Moreover, in 2016, Alexandria's shelters housed 111 people due to domestic violence, including 53 children, a number that also has remained constant since 2010.²³⁰

In 2015, the Sexual Assault Center provided services to a total of 446 new victims, 89 percent of whom were women or girls. The majority of the services provided were related to adult sexual assaults. These figures were in keeping with trends seen since at least 2010.²³¹ Services provided by the Sexual Assault Center could include:

- Sexual assault hotline calls
- Accompaniment to court (civil or criminal proceeding), pre-trial, and pre-charging meeting
- Accompanying to the hospital for an exam or law enforcement interview
- Individual supportive counseling
- Therapy
- Support groups

While the number of homicides in Alexandria has historically been low, women are more likely than men to be killed by another person. In 2017, five women were victims of homicide — as compared to one man.²³² Similarly, nine women were victims of reported rapes, and no men.²³³

As Alexandria Police Chief Brown told the Alexandria Times, many of the serious crimes that were reported in Alexandria

in 2017 were associated with domestic violence. “An example of that is our homicide cases,” Brown said. “In all but one of those homicide cases last year, there was some domestic violence overtones in the actual case.”²³⁴

Increased Community Outreach

In the five years from 2011 to 2016, the SAC/DVP greatly increased community outreach programs with a focus on the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence. In addition, SAC/DVP introduced information on how to prevent and deal with stalking. From 2011 to 2016, the number of community engagement activities that were held on domestic violence and sexual assault prevention increased threefold — going from 53 total activities in 2011 to 180 in 2016.²³⁵

In particular, outreach vastly increased in the public school system with 55 school-related activities in 2016, up from three in 2011. As a result, this educational and prevention programming reached 1,240 Alexandria children, including a larger number of black and Latino children. In both 2011 and 2016, community engagement was almost equally divided between men and women.²³⁶

Lack of Funding for Prevention

In the fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget, funds for the City's SAC/DVP came from the local government (61 percent) and grants (39 percent). Much of this grant funding goes to prevention services to educate and raise awareness of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

Grant funding is not permanent and may be awarded on an annual basis. There are no guarantees that funding will be

renewed or will be renewed in full. While no programming has been discontinued yet (except for self-defense courses, which were once offered through the Sexual Assault Center), the reliance on grant funding for prevention services presents challenges. For example, funding mainly through grants limits the ability to plan for future programs and needs and presents uncertainty around how to educate the women and youth who may need to access these programs.

The CFW applauds the requests from City leaders to the state to continue funding the processing of backlogged Physical Evidence Recovery Kits (PERKs).²³⁷ These kits are used to collect physical evidence from victims of sexual assault. In 2015, a state audit found that there were more than 2,300 PERKs that had yet to be processed.²³⁸

General Perceptions of Safety

The City of Alexandria is generally regarded as a safe community by its residents. However, women do not feel as safe in Alexandria as men do. This mirrors gender differences in safety perceptions between boys and girls in high school, as discussed earlier in this report.

A 2017 survey shows that 20 percent of women do not feel safe in Alexandria (compared to 11 percent of men).²³⁹ The CFW was not able to find out what makes women feel unsafe – and that is a question that must be answered. A few focus group participants cited gang-related activities and a lack of streetlights on street arteries as causes for concern, and these are only a few anecdotal responses. A more vigorous review of this issue is warranted.

Community Safety and Hate Crimes

As hate crimes are increasing around the nation, and open rallies for white supremacy are emerging out of the shadows, the CFW believes that these issues have a major impact on the safety and well-being of women in Alexandria. The city is not immune to crimes of hate, racism, and misogyny. While the CFW does not have any specific data pertaining to the intersection of hate crimes and women in the city, the CFW does want to voice concern and a plea that the City always be prepared for safety in public spaces.

Human Trafficking

Alexandria has been proactive in addressing human trafficking within the city. As has been the case nationwide, an increasing number of resources have been devoted to addressing the problem in Alexandria as law enforcement and social agencies have become more aware of the fact that human trafficking can, and does, happen anywhere.

Sex trafficking primarily impacts women and girls. Runaway youths are particularly at risk, according to the Polaris Project, because they lack a strong supportive network and tend to flee to unfamiliar environments. This is one reason that the Alexandria Police Department has set up a daily monitoring system for all reported runaway cases. In addition, a cross-agency group meets monthly to ensure that resources are in place to keep runaways, once they are found, from running away again.

“When a child runs away, they are either running away from something or running to something,” said Sergeant Jeff Harrington with the Alexandria Police Department’s Criminal Investigations Section-Special Victims Unit.

Sergeant Harrington noted that the system that is in place in Alexandria (referring victims to the City’s Sexual Assault Center or finding them shelter through the domestic violence shelter) is working and needs to be maintained.

In Virginia, a total of 148 incidents of potential human trafficking were reported to the National Human Trafficking hotline in 2016, out of a total of 622 substantive calls received from within state lines. Virginia ranked ninth in terms of call volume nationwide²⁴⁰ and given Alexandria’s location as a transit location to other major cities, the city needs to maintain its vigilance to stop and prevent human trafficking.

It is an historic time, and the CFW is eager to understand the implications of the #MeToo movement for women and girls in Alexandria.

#MeToo

The past year has seen the emergence of the #MeToo movement across the nation. Women and men have come forward to tell countless stories about sexual assault and sexual harassment in all aspects of their lives, and for the first time for many, they have been heard.

As a result, society's understanding of the impact that sexual harassment and sexual violence can have on women's lives is evolving. Rather than being viewed as a series of isolated incidents, society is now beginning to see the full reach of sexual harassment — as a widespread societal problem that impacts survivors, and all of us, in different ways. It is an historic time, and the CFW is eager to understand the implications of the #MeToo movement for women and girls in Alexandria.

In conjunction with the #MeToo movement, the Division Chief of the SAC/DVP, Debbie Evans, reported that the City's domestic violence and sexual assault hotline has seen a noticeable increase in sexual harassment related calls in 2018. Many of the calls that the hotline has received involve past offenses, which are not yet correlating with the filing of sexual harassment claims. The Human Rights office has not had an increase in the number of sexual harassment cases filed in recent years.

Nevertheless, given the increase in hotline calls, the CFW believes that Alexandria — and the nation as a whole — must remain committed to educating men, women, girls, and boys, about sexual harassment and healthy relationships. Indeed, ACAP Coordinator, Lisette Torres, highlighted this point in an interview for this report when she stated, “Healthy relationships are something that young people really have a hard time understanding, and we are talking about issues like consent...that is really important education that needs to be incorporated whether it is in our [ACAP's] work, or what they are learning in the schools, or whatever it may be.”

Moreover, the uptick in hotline calls may be evidence that outreach, awareness, and services for sexual harassment and sexual violence is needed not only in the immediate aftermath of an incident, but for many years afterward as the impacts continue to linger and current events can trigger retraumatization.

This could be one of the greatest lessons to be learned from the #MeToo movement. In today's society, where the implications of a longstanding “rape culture” are only now coming to light, ongoing public education and services for women and girls are needed to help them emerge, heal, and thrive.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Recommendations

This report offers two types of recommendations: 1) broad based changes that would cut across many aspects of women's lives and change systems, procedures, and policy making in the City, and 2) specific recommendations for targeted issues that stand out in the report's findings based on high levels of gender difference, the degree of severity for women, or issues that may be discrete, yet have a significant impact on women.²⁴¹

Broad Based Changes

1

Apply a gender lens to City decisions on budgeting and development. Policies have distinct effects on women and men, yet decisions may be taken without considering differential impacts. The City should systematically consider the gender impacts of policies in the following areas:

a.

Land use: Proximity to child care and public facilities such as libraries, schools, parks, recreation centers and health services should be explicitly considered in all small area plans and zoning decisions. Consider incentivizing affordable high-quality child care options in child care deserts as well as essential amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and laundromats in areas with a high number of residents reliant on public transportation.

b.

Transportation: Consider women and families as key users of transportation infrastructure and explicitly incorporate their specific needs in transportation plans. For example, pedestrian right-of-ways should be designed with families in mind, expanding the use of crosswalk 'bump-outs,' and increasing time for crossing at intersections to allow for young children. Bus routes should connect areas with high densities of children with child care facilities, libraries, parks, and other public amenities. Entry onto buses should be made easier for women with children in strollers. Gender differences in safety concerns must be taken into account when determining bus stop locations and lighting, crowding on a bus, predictability in scheduling, countdown clocks, and awareness of and reporting on sexual violence on public transportation.

c.

Housing: Encourage housing development that provides space for children’s play and enables supervision and care for children in and around the home. Best practices in multi-family housing design for families recommend garden style apartments and family size affordable units on the first three floors of a building. Lower level units should have balconies or windows overlooking the outdoor space where children would play. Housing developments planned according to these and similar principles have the greatest benefit for caregivers and children, single parents in particular. Continue to work with owners of multifamily housing to improve pedestrian experiences in parking lots and areas surrounding housing units, particularly those with active daycare centers on-site

In the process of applying a gender lens, the City should seek out the perspectives of women, including women of color and low-income women, in transportation and land use planning, housing development, and consideration of funding priorities.

2

Create a small division of three to four staff that reports to the City Manager’s Office and whose mission is to introduce a gender lens into policy-making and implementation across departments. City staff are neither specifically trained nor experienced in considering the differential impacts of policies across genders. The gender impact team would raise awareness of national best practices in supporting gender equity and women’s well-being through public policy, and assist in implementation. Staff would work with T&ES on women and transit and pedestrian issues, with Housing on designing affordable housing that meets women’s needs, with Planning on linking development with childcare facilities and public amenities, and with DHCS on continuing model programs on sexual assault and domestic violence, among other areas of relevance for women. In addition to direct support, staff would provide training to City staff, the CFW, and other relevant commissions and boards on using a gender lens to evaluate policy and implementation options.

The team would also lead on critical issues that directly affect women. As an agency reporting directly to the City Manager’s Office, the team would provide the City with strategic guidance on programs and services that impact women, and are housed in wide variety of agencies, centers, and departments, such as the Workforce Development Center; the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs; and the Office of Human Rights.

The team would assess and monitor key indicators of women’s opportunities that are collected by offices across the City. More broadly, the team would work with the Office of Performance and Evaluation to ensure measurements and indicators capture the gender impacts of City policies and programs.

The team would also focus on outreach and the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in City planning and policy-making efforts. Staff would partner with community leaders and organizations throughout Alexandria to develop methods for diverse populations to impact City decision making.

3

Develop a three-pronged approach to enabling women with low-wages to live and thrive in Alexandria. Substantial numbers of women in Alexandria work in occupations associated with low pay, lack of job security, and few benefits if any. Industries in which these occupations are found are expanding. The growth of lower-paying occupations in Alexandria will result in increased economic vulnerability for women. As the National Women’s Law Center stated, “given women’s overrepresentation in low-wage jobs, a women’s economic agenda must take particular account of low-wage workers’ needs for improved pay, working conditions, and work supports.”

The first prong for enabling women with low-wages to live and thrive in Alexandria relies on the economic development strategies to attract and retain employers. The City should expand the criteria for providing economic development incentives to employers to include exemplary wage, leave, benefit, and scheduling policies and practices. Moreover, the City should work with AEDP to collect a wider range of information from major employers located in Alexandria. Important information includes:

a.

Wage information

b.

Predictable sch Benefit information, including leave policies such as paid sick leave, paid family and/or parental leave

c. Options for workplace flexibility, such as teleworking

d. Predictable scheduling efforts

e. Information on child care subsidies or the provision of on-site child care for employees

f. Diversity and inclusion practices and policies, including the number of women employed, and the number of women holding leadership positions

In these efforts, the City is urged to consider partnerships with the CFW and other relevant commissions and boards, including the Economic Opportunities Commission and the Commission on Employment.

The second prong examines how the City can use its authority to assist these workers with the high costs of living in Alexandria. As housing and child care top the list as the largest expenses, innovative efforts in these two areas are strongly recommended. The City should exhaust all efforts to expand affordable housing, including market affordable two bedroom units. City zoning laws that limit the supply of affordable housing should be examined and efforts to amend them should be considered. Similarly, the City should continue to seek to expand affordable child care, including public pre-kindergarten and public-private partnerships.

The City should conduct and electronically publish a landscape analysis of existing assistance provided to Alexandrians through City, non-profit, and other providers. This will help service providers, as well as the customers, understand the full array of options. Within the City's grant giving, prioritize funding for nonprofits and service providers that assist economically vulnerable women and girls to help cover costs of living, including housing, child care, food, and health care.

The third prong involves the City showing strong support and leadership on education, workforce training, and skills development. From funding and encouraging innovative programs within ACPS, to partnering with NVCC to provide interpretation services for immigrant populations seeking license and certification, the City can serve as a champion of education and workforce development for all Alexandrians, including the economically vulnerable populations of women and girls.

4

Continue to strive for gender equality and the well-being of women within the City workforce by building on the momentum of the Pay Equity Report and the newly adopted parental leave benefit for City employees. Deepen the analysis on pay equity by exploring the larger gaps for women of color and other sub-groups of women (ages and job categories) described in this report. Continue to monitor women's representation in the City workforce in each job category and department. Report back to the CFW and City Council on a biannual basis. Reports should include actions planned and actions taken to meet hiring, recruitment, and retention goals.

The City should closely monitor and guide the implementation and usage of the new paid parental leave policy for City employees. Attention should be paid to usage rate by women and men across different departments, institutional norms around usage of leave, and perceptions of being penalized for using leave. This information should be made available to the CFW. ACPS should evaluate pay equity within its workforce and explore parental leave policies similar to efforts by the City.

Explore benefits options for City and ACPS employees that would mitigate against high costs of living in Alexandria, including avenues for assisting in child care and housing costs in the city. This would be in line with recent efforts at the state level to examine child care option for state employees and could positively impact recruitment and retention within the city workforce.

Specific Recommendations for Targeted Issues

5

Establish an ACPS liaison to the CFW. Representatives from ACPS/CFW/CYFCC and DCHS (staff within the Center for Children and Families) should meet on a periodic basis to share information, raise awareness, and plan for actions regarding common issues impacting girls in Alexandria that emerged in this report. These include education and career preparedness in STEM fields, the need for mentoring, alarming statistics on mental health indicators and high teenage pregnancy rates for Hispanic adolescents. There are also areas pertinent to equal opportunities for girls that the CFW did not have the resources to research for this report, but deserve exploration.

6

Begin the process of creating a contingency plan to support sexual assault/domestic violence outreach, awareness, and education in the event that existing grant funding stalls or terminates.

7

Request a report from the Sheriff's Office to the City Manager's Office on the increase in incarceration rates with a focus on women, and report this information to the CFW.

8

Prepare periodic updates for the CFW summarizing information on sexual harassment reports and claims. Included in the first update should be an explanation of the reporting process and any potential barriers to reporting by victims of sexual harassment. Pursue additional resources for community outreach and training on sexual harassment.

9

Take follow-up action on the health issues impacting women and girls as identified in this report.

a.

Breast Cancer - The City and the AHD, in partnership with the CFW and the Vola Lawson Breast Cancer Memorial Fund, should examine disparities in breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and mortality rates, and make recommendations to the CFW and City Council on how to address. Identify opportunities for the CFW and the Vola Lawson Fund to support initiatives.

b.

HIV/AIDS - The number of women living with HIV/AIDS in Alexandria is considerably higher than national and state rates. The CFW requests that the AHD provide information to the CFW on these rates, along with suggestions about how to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infections in women.

c.

Mental Health for Girls - The rates of mental health issues are strikingly higher for girls

than boys in Alexandria. This emerging trend needs urgent attention. The CFW recommends that City Council appoint an ad hoc Task Force on Girls' Mental Health, which should include representatives from the CFW, ACPS, AHD, CYFCC, community organizations, and youth groups.

d.

Teen Pregnancy - ACAP has begun work to address reducing the teenage pregnancy rate for Hispanic girls in Alexandria. The CFW requests continued periodic updates from ACAP.

e.

Maternal Mortality - Maternal mortality is a major issue for black women in Virginia. Information on maternal mortality in Alexandria is needed to determine the severity of this problem at the local level.

Next Steps for the Commission for Women

Findings from this report will shape the future actions and initiatives of the CFW as it carries out its charge to provide guidance and advice to eliminate discrimination against women and encourage equal opportunity. In addition to making the aforementioned recommendations to the City, the CFW aims to submit a legislative package for advocacy at the state level based on areas of need highlighted in the report such as predictable scheduling, living wage, and pregnancy discrimination legislation.

The CFW's plan of action for the coming years will likewise be informed by the topics discussed in this report, including areas where further research and investigation are necessary. For example, a 2017 survey shows that 20 percent of women do not feel safe in Alexandria compared to 11 percent of men. The CFW was not able to find out what makes women feel unsafe. As such, a more pointed review is needed.

The report indicated that the sexual assault hotline has had an increase in calls, and whether the trend will continue is unknown.

Current events have shed light on the long-term effects of sexual assault in victim's lives. As more women share stories of past traumas, there may be a need for additional services.

While the City's domestic violence and sexual assault programs are comprehensive, there are still services that need to be expanded, such as providing legal services and immigration support for survivors. The CFW hopes to work with DVP/SAC staff to explore options for such programming. Women in the city face barriers to running for and holding public office. These barriers are multifaceted and include fewer networks for fundraising, mentoring needs, and harassment on the campaign trail. The CFW looks forward to contributing to the discussion on developing and maintaining leadership paths for women.

Finally, the CFW aims to create an index, from a variety of indicators on issues discussed in this report, that can provide a quick snapshot on women's equality and wellbeing in Alexandria.

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