

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 71 : ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

This memorandum is in response to three questions asked by Councilman Gaines with respect to the Alexandria Health Department. (1) Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with promoting a voluntary smoke-free restaurant policy in the City of Alexandria. (2) Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with creating a mobile immunization team to staff immunization clinics at select locations in areas of the City, and (3) Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with programmatically enhancing minority AIDS outreach, prevention and awareness.

1. **Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with promoting a voluntary smoke-free restaurant policy in the City of Alexandria.**

Tobacco use was identified as a priority for action in the recent Alexandria Community Health Assessment. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) recently awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) to promote smoke-free restaurants for the time period March 1 - June 30, 2005. By June 30, the AHD hopes to have contacted all restaurants, completed an initial assessment of smoking policies, assembled a list of smoke-free restaurants and posted it on the AHD website, designed a brochure promoting smoke-free restaurants, and begun targeting restaurants for a smoke-free campaign. Continued funding from the State after June 30, 2005 is uncertain.

In order to continue these educational and outreach activities if the State funds expire, the AHD estimates the program would cost approximately \$13,000 per year, primarily for a part-time Health Educator (10 hours per week), some supplies, and printing and media costs.

It should be noted that the Proposed FY 2006 Budget includes funding for a new full-time position, beginning on January 1, 2006, to staff a "Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria," in order to implement the Community Health Assessment. This position could assist with the promotion of a voluntary smoke-free restaurant policy, so staff does not recommend additional funding for a part-time Health Educator to undertake voluntary smoke restraint promotion activities.

2. Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with creating a mobile immunization team to staff immunization clinics at targeted locations in all areas of the City.

Childhood immunization statistics are gathered annually by the Alexandria Health Department (AHD). Data from 2004 for preschool age children show that Alexandria has the highest up-to-date immunization rate in Virginia for children by the age of two. Alexandria's rate is 77%, compared to 66% in Northern Virginia, and 55% in the State. In addition, data gathered at school entry show Alexandria's 5-year-olds with a 98.5% immunization rate, compared to a 96.5% rate statewide. Overall, in comparison to other jurisdictions, Alexandria has exceptional childhood immunization rates. This is due to both public and private providers working together to achieve this goal.

With regard to influenza immunizations, the AHD stated that the problem last year was not an inability in getting the vaccine to people, but a lack of vaccine. Normally, the flu vaccine is readily available in Alexandria at Giant grocery stores, INOVA Alexandria Hospital, through private providers, the Health Department, and the Arlandria Health Center. The Health Department also works closely with nursing homes.

In summary, Alexandria encompasses a relatively small geographic area and has a very effective network of public and private health providers that work well together with regard to providing immunizations. Costs to purchase, outfit, staff and maintain a mobile van could approach \$200,000. The AHD believes that this is not needed and would not be cost-effective.

3. Feasibility and costs, if any, associated with programmatically enhancing minority AIDS outreach, prevention and awareness.

There are numerous organizations in Northern Virginia and Alexandria that address HIV/AIDS education, outreach, and prevention for the general population and also for targeted minority populations. Prior to January 2004, the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) had a Minority AIDS Coordinator position. This position was phased out when a decision was made to manage and centralize resources at the state level. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) channels money to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). VDH in turn funds Minority AIDS Projects and AIDS Service Organizations in Northern Virginia. Organizations currently funded as Minority AIDS Projects are the Ethiopian Community Development Council, K.I., Services, Inc., and Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia. K. I. Services, Inc., located in Alexandria, was incorporated in 2001 as a health services nonprofit organization and focuses on educating and assisting people of color. The Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry (NOVAM) receives State funding as an AIDS Service Organization.

In addition to these state-funded programs, the AHD provides HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, partner counseling and referral services, and primary medical care and case management for uninsured and under insured Alexandria residents. NOVAM receives funding from the Alexandria Youth Fund to train peer educators. The Arlandria Health Center, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center, also provides HIV testing, counseling, case management, and referral. The City's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse

provides an array of services to their consumers, including testing and pre- and post-test counseling. Substance abuse prevention staff incorporate information about HIV prevention in their work with youth at schools and at community locations.

The AHD participates in both the Alexandria Commission on HIV/AIDS and the Northern Virginia AIDS Consortium. Alexandria's Commission on HIV/AIDS consists of 27 volunteers appointed to three-year terms by City Council. This Commission is charged with advising City Council on the formulation and implementation of public policy on HIV/AIDS and promotes educational programs on awareness, treatment and prevention. It should be noted that the new staff position proposed in FY 2006 to implement the Community Health Assessment would also be working on this issue, since HIV/AIDS was identified as an action priority in the Community Health Assessment.

The Alexandria Health Department estimates that hiring a new full-time AIDS Educator would cost approximately \$52,000, including personnel and non-personnel expenditures. A new position is not recommended at this time, due to limited City resources and the number of other organizations currently addressing this need.