



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of December 9, 2006

DATE: November 2, 2006

SUBJECT: State Funded Forensic Coordinator

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNTY BOARD:

1. Appropriate \$75,000 from the Virginia General Assembly 2006 Appropriation Act (101.364501) to the Department of Human Services (DHS) (101.52132) for a forensic case management coordinator position.
2. Authorize 1.0 FTE permanent grant-funded Mental Health Therapist III position in DHS to provide coordination and management of forensic case management services.

ISSUES: Should DHS use the 2006 Appropriation Act grant to create a 1.0 FTE Forensic Case Management Coordinator to manage the forensic program and provide direct service to mentally ill inmates leaving the Arlington County Detention Facility (ACDF)?

SUMMARY: DHS Behavioral Healthcare Division has received notification of new recurring state funding from the Virginia General Assembly 2006 Appropriation Act to expand community-based programs that divert individuals with mental illness from jails and for aftercare programs for individuals with mental illness who have been released from jail. The available monies would fund the salary of a forensic case management coordinator to provide coordination and management of forensic case management services in the forensic mental health population in Arlington.

BACKGROUND: The large number of seriously mentally ill individuals in the criminal justice system has been a source of discussion and concern on the local, state and national levels over the past several years. Communities impacted by the increase in mentally ill incarcerated individuals are faced with the challenge of creating innovative solutions to the growing environmental and systemic dilemma. Our jails and prisons have become the new state facilities for the mentally ill. Jails and prisons are not the proper setting for individuals who are often acutely impaired by severe psychiatric disorders.

In Northern Virginia (Health Planning Region II), each Community Services Board is looking at the abovementioned issue in a unique manner. In Arlington, staff has convened a Mental Health Criminal Justice Review Committee which has been meeting regularly for over two years. This committee is comprised of DHS staff, a judge from General District Court, the Chief Magistrate for Arlington, top administrators of the ACDF, Community Corrections, CSB staff, police

County Manager: _____
County Attorney: _____
Staff: Leslie Weisman, Behavioral Healthcare, DHS

representatives, representation from the Public Defenders office and the Commonwealth Attorney's office, as well as mental health advocates. This group made the recommendation several months ago to pursue funding for a forensic case management coordinator to provide program development, clinical supervision and direct service to the forensic mental health population in Arlington.

DISCUSSION: With the addition of a forensic case management coordinator there will be a seamless system of engaging with seriously mentally ill individuals at a number of points along the criminal justice system, e.g. pre-arrest, during incarceration and after release from the jail. By working with the population in the community, the goal will be to expedite linkages to services and reduce recidivism. The coordinator will provide transportation as needed to appointments for entitlements, clinic appointments, etc. The caseload is expected to be 15-20 persons at any given time and serving about 80 persons on an annual basis when including the work of the forensic case manager. The position will work closely with staff of the ACDF to allow for face-to-face assessments in the jail and provision of discharge planning and linkages. This position will also strengthen critical partnerships between the forensic case management coordinator and the criminal justice system, e.g. General District, Circuit and Juvenile & Domestic Relations Courts, Public Defender office, Commonwealth Attorney's office, private attorneys, probation and parole, etc. to advocate successfully for the incarcerated seriously mentally ill.

The Community Services Board approved this as an action item at their November 15, 2006, Executive Committee Meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: None. There is no impact on net tax support.