



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of July 7, 2007**

DATE: July 7, 2007

SUBJECT: Regional Geriatric Facilities Mental Health Support Program

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

1. Appropriate \$1,050,000 from the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (101.364501) to the Department of Human Services (DHS) (101.53301) for the creation of a Regional Geriatric Facilities Mental Health Support Program.
2. Authorize 6.0 FTE permanent grant-funded positions in DHS to operate a regional geriatric mental health program at long-term care facilities in the Northern Virginia region.

ISSUE: Should Arlington County government accept state funds to administer and operate a Regional Geriatric Facilities Mental Health Support Program?

SUMMARY: As part of the FY 2008 state budget, the General Assembly approved \$1,050,000 in ongoing funds for geriatric mental health support to the Northern Virginia region. The funds will provide specialized geriatric mental health services at two to three long-term care facilities in the region. Arlington County will be responsible for the hiring and supervision of staff who will manage the program on behalf of the Northern Virginia region. The County will receive \$47,250 to administer this regional program.

The intent of the program is to divert and discharge older adults from the Hancock Geriatric Center at Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg and the Piedmont Geriatric Psychiatric Hospital in Burkeville. The program targets Northern Virginia residents over the age of 65 with serious mental illness who are at risk of long-term hospitalization in a state psychiatric hospital. This will reduce the number of expensive hospital bed days by providing a less restrictive and less costly alternative to in-patient hospitalization in distant locales.

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Odile Saddi, Aging and Disability Services Division, DHS

BACKGROUND: Beginning in January 2006, the Northern Virginia region began planning for the diversion and discharge of people needing or receiving services provided by Eastern State Hospital and the Piedmont Geriatric Center. Currently, twelve of 40 Northern Virginia seniors with mental illness residing at Eastern State Hospital are Arlington residents.

The following groups were involved in the planning of this initiative: staff from regional Community Service Boards (CSBs), CSB members, members of the Regional Partnership Planning Committee and its Older Adult Work Group. The work group includes staff from nursing homes, assisted living facilities, private hospital discharge planners, consumers, and family members of consumers. Additionally, staff from Eastern State Hospital, Area Agencies on Aging, and the Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman office provided input on the best approach to diversion and discharge for older adults in need of psychiatric hospital care.

State funds have been allocated from two sources for FY 2008: \$500,000 from Mental Health Community Block Grant funds and \$550,000 from the Eastern State Transformation Fund. These funds are to be used to serve Northern Virginians with severe mental illness over the age of 65 by reducing the number of persons placed in distant state psychiatric hospitals. The program also seeks to return to Northern Virginia seniors who are already institutionalized. These mental health services are for eligible residents of Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Falls Church City, Loudoun County and Prince William County.

DISCUSSION: A regional geriatric mental health team will be established to provide care in several long-term geriatric mental health facilities for seniors who require a longer stay to stabilize their psychiatric symptoms. Staffing for this team will include a program director, a nurse, a management specialist, and three mental health therapists. One County vehicle will be purchased for staff use. Funds will be also used to obtain the services of a contract psychiatrist and a psychologist. Additionally, the program will provide limited support to selected long-term facilities to increase their ability to serve this population. At this time, representatives from each participating jurisdiction are working to finalize a work plan for implementation of the program. Arlington staff, together with representatives from all of the jurisdictions, will serve on a steering committee responsible for policy development and program oversight.

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