

Response to Questions on the FY 2019 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Gross

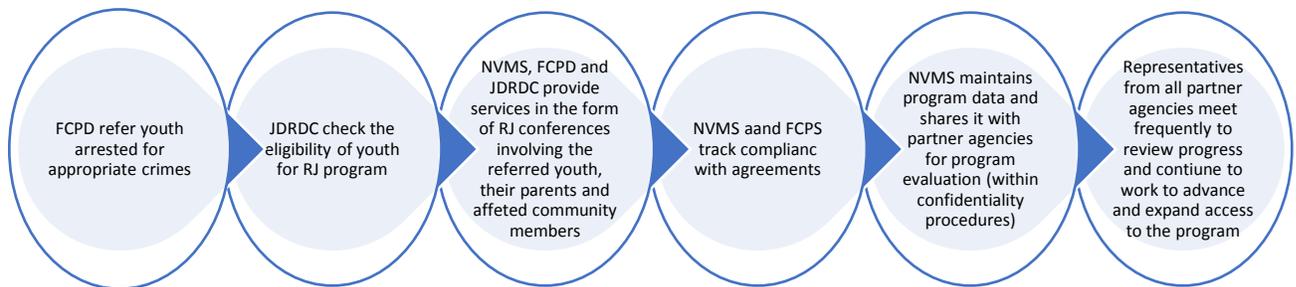
Question: #42 Health and Human Services Resource Plan – How is the agency partially absorbing the costs for Mediation/Restorative Justice Services APP and how will this continue into future years?

Response:

Background

The Fairfax County Alternative Accountability Program (AAP) is a collaborative and community-oriented response to juvenile crime and wrongdoing in our community and schools. AAP is based on restorative justice principles and helps youth and community members address select criminal offenses effectively without creating a criminal record for the youth involved. Restorative Justice (RJ) conferencing is a proven approach in regards to addressing serious issues and increasing positive outcomes. The goals for this program are to reduce the number of youth who are court-involved and have criminal records; to hold youth accountable for their actions without exposing them to risk factors associated with having a criminal record; to create appropriate, incident-specific responses for each case; to reduce recurrence of criminal acts by youth; and to provide support for victims by participating in identifying how their harm is addressed.

Partner agencies include: Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD), Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Fairfax County Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC), Northern Virginia Mediation Services (NVMS), and Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS). These agencies collaborate in order to identify eligible youth, provide services and share information. Below is an outline of the process:



Current Practices

AAP services are generally available to County residents including the Town of Herndon, Town of Vienna and the City of Fairfax. However, program participation numbers are increasing due to a large portion of shoplifting cases involving non-Fairfax County youth originating out of the McLean and Franconia Districts.

Since program inception, 370 cases involving 715 youth have been facilitated. Currently there are 41 cases pending assignment. Due to the overwhelming success of the program, pending cases and wait times are longer than desired. While increased interest in the program is overall positive, it also presents challenges. In order to address these challenges JDRDC has made the following program modifications.

Facilitation – Best practice dictates two facilitators. Initially, all RJ conferences were facilitated by two facilitators, one county and one NVMS. In order to address pending cases and reduce wait times, the program began solo facilitation in November 2017. JDRDC is currently addressing the shortage of facilitators through a revised contract with NVMS; however, due to the increased volume and complexity of the cases it is expected the contracted rate for facilitation will increase.

Staffing – In an effort to provide a timelier response to referrals, 1.5 full-time equivalent positions in JDRDC have redirected from their current duties for AAP.

Funding – The AAP program is currently being supported through the JDRDC budget. Expenditures have been trending slightly over \$50,000 annually. To date, JDRDC has been able absorb the cost of the program through other operating efficiencies, however as the program continues to grow alternative funding sources will need to be identified.

Moving Forward

This program is still in its infancy in regards to full implementation county wide. At this point it is difficult to determine future staffing and funding needs given the continuing growth of the program. JDRDC will continue moving forward with data collection, evidence-based practices and program evaluation in order to make accurate future year projections for program participation, appropriate staffing and funding requirements.