

Item 4



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: April 30, 2013

Prepared By/Phone Number: Caryl Colburn, CES Director, 854-4618

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Roger Jefferies, Justice and Public Safety
County Executive, 854-4759

Commissioners Court Sponsor: Judge Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE: CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON REQUEST TO WAIVE FEES FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNSELING AND EDUCATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT FOR THE DRUG MARKET INITIATIVE.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS: Counseling and Education Services (CES) is requesting that fees be waived for services provided to approximately 20 clients for the Drug Market Intervention (DMI) which is taking place in Austin/Travis County during the month of May, 2013. CES services would include an Alcohol/Drug Assessment, the Drug Education Program and the Cognitive Change for Positive Living Program. The assessment appointments will be set for the month of May, 2013 only. The classes may extend into other months.

The DMI is taken from a national model to reduce violence in neighborhoods through community engagement. It is a strategic problem-solving initiative aimed at eliminating open-air drug markets and the associated crime, violence and disorder that accompanies them. A major goal is to return the neighborhood to the residents, thereby, improving the public's safety and their quality of life.

The strategy targets an individual neighborhood-based drug market and the drug dealers known to be the repeat and violent offenders, and prosecutes them to demonstrate what will happen if one continues to sell drugs and commit serious crimes in the area. An intervention or "call-in" is then staged for the lower level offenders by law enforcement along with family/influentials and community members. They all let the lower level offenders know that they will no longer tolerate this criminal behavior but will support them in seeking services such as drug treatment, job training, housing, transportation and healthcare. The offenders then have a choice to either take this opportunity or face the maximum penalties allowed. The community is also involved in providing the rehabilitative services.

The partners in the Austin/Travis County DMI are Austin Police Department, the District Attorney's Office, Counseling and Education Services, Austin Goodwill, SafePlace, Foundation for the Homeless, Salvation Army, Building Greater Relationships, The Wright House, Life Anew, Austin Recovery, Celebration House, Mission Possible, and Promiseland. New partners will become involved as the initiative progresses.

AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE: All agenda requests and supporting materials should be submitted as a pdf to the County Judge's office, agenda@co.travis.tx.us by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends that CES fees be waived temporarily for services provided to approximately 20 clients for the DMI.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES: CES will assess approximately 20 clients and directly refer to alcohol/drug treatment or education. DMI combines a neighborhood law enforcement strategy with a community restorative justice approach. This includes referrals to appropriate social services based on individualized risk and needs. The partners of this project are all offering services pro bono. Core participants may be indigent, homeless, and unemployed. Consequently pro bono services will allow core participants to become engaged in treatment, find housing, initiate education or workforce development programs and other services immediately. The DMI is using existing resources only, therefore, all providers involved are waiving fees or utilizing public funding from agencies such as the Texas Department of State Health Services in accordance with contractual agreements. Core participants who volunteer to be included in the program will attend community circles based upon the Safe Streets Initiative conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These circles are facilitated by community members and focus on support for pro-social change and accountability regarding substance use and criminal activity. The availability of easily accessed services is a crucial component of the supportive quality of the circles.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING: CES currently charges \$55.00 for an Alcohol/Drug Assessment, \$90.00 for the Drug Education Program and \$125.00 for the Cognitive Change for Positive Living Program. Each client from the DMI will receive an assessment but not all will be referred to a CES class. Waiving the fees of 20 clients should not affect the overall revenue of the CES department which is estimated at \$1,124,635 for FY13. The revenue loss based on CES averages would be approximately \$1,793.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Roger Jefferies, Justice and Public Safety County Executive - 44759;

Caryl Colburn, CES Director - 44618;

Mark Spacht, CES Clinical Manager - 46423;

Teresa Goff, CES Program Manager - 44133;

Dan Wilson, Auditor's Office - 44706;

Katie Gipson, PBO – 49346;

Jim Connolly, County Attorney's Office - 49539.

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