



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**17-1571

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**Agenda Item Number:** 10.

**Agenda Date:** 2/9/2017

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Municipal Court

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Presiding Judge John Bull

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City-wide

### **SUBJECT:**

Truancy Intervention and Prevention Program Grant submission, in the amount of up to \$1,400,000.00, from the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office

### **SUMMARY:**

This ordinance approves the submission of a Truancy Intervention and Prevention Program grant application of up to \$1,400,000.00 from the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office for the period of August 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018. Municipal Court, in accordance with the San Antonio/Bexar County Joint Committee on Truancy, recognizes the significance of intervention and prevention services for youth. Addressing the underlying challenges families encounter is the key to success. Funding would allow an increase in the number of juvenile case managers assigned to schools throughout Bexar County and increase programming.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Truancy limits students' educational opportunities, increases the likelihood of students engaging in harmful behavior and reduces the amount of funding that local school districts receive through the state's school finance system. In Bexar County, efforts to address truancy are complicated by the large number of local jurisdictions, disparate filing methods, and a high level of student mobility among school districts. Over fifteen independent school districts were filing truancy cases using different approaches and were filing cases with any one of six justice of the peace courts or with Municipal Court. In 2013, HB 1479 (83rd legislative session) was signed into law, which mandated the creation of a truancy committee to develop a uniform process for administering, tracking and reducing truancy for the fifteen school districts in Bexar County. Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff and then Mayor Julian Castro appointed a Truancy Committee of eleven members, which recommended an addendum to the Master Interlocal Agreement between the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. On May 29, 2014, City Council approved Addendum A-11 to the Master Interlocal Agreement which established a

Uniform Truancy Case Management Program. On April 29, 2014, Addendum A-11 was passed unanimously by the Bexar County Commissioners' Court.

## **ISSUE:**

The demand for additional juvenile case managers and for expansion of programs has increased with the volume of referrals the juvenile court is handling; students are placed on mediation dockets that include a combination of programs to address specific underlying problems for a specific time period. There is evidence of a reduction in recidivism and truancy by youth who engage in productive social service programs that cover a variety of family needs. Currently the court has 16 case managers and is seeking to add additional staffing to meet the demands. The role of the school-based case manager is to arrange meetings with San Antonio public schools and to conduct educational forums for parents at the schools, educating them on truancy and the law. In addition, case managers work closely with school administrators to identify children at risk of violating truancy laws and falling behind. Case managers monitor student attendance during the agreed time period resulting from mediation. They meet with students on a regular basis and facilitate social service programs for the students. Case managers also attend required training from the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center and other entities. They are required to not only implement programs, but also develop their own programs. Case managers communicate with families on a regular basis to determine progress and identify any potential problems that need to be addressed so that school attendance remains consistent.

## **ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative would be for the City to take no action, resulting in challenges in meeting the needs of all the school districts throughout Bexar County. Currently there is a demand to place additional case managers at larger schools and there is a need for expansion of programs.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This ordinance approves the submission of a Truancy Intervention and Prevention Program grant application of up to \$1,400,000 from the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office for the period of August 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018. If the grant is awarded, a separate ordinance will be considered by City Council to accept the awarded funds and authorize a personnel complement.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval.