



TEEN MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE AND PROGRAMMING PROPOSAL

Arlington County, in collaboration with Arlington Public Schools (APS), has developed a multi-pronged pilot approach for the \$750,000 in one-time funding for teen mental health and substance use provided by the County Board in November 2023. In addition, the County Manager's proposed FY 2025 budget includes \$1.2 million (one-time and ongoing funding) to ensure continuation and possible expansion of these efforts, for a total of \$2.0 million in funding. This is in addition to existing youth programs at APS, Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Juvenile and Domestic Relations (JDR), and other County departments.

Investments to Date

This proposal builds on the investments made by the County and APS over the last few years. For **youth**, the focus has been on teens and families in the greatest need – those who are experiencing immediate substance use and mental health issues (Tier 2 / Tier 3) and require intervention services now to avoid further crisis. Highlights include:

- Placement of 4.0 DHS therapists in high schools in the 2023-2024 school year (with rotation as needed to middle schools)
- Development of youth intensive outpatient programs (IOP) with National Capital Treatment & Recovery and Virginia Hospital Center (VHC)
- Increased distribution of Naloxone to teens and families and at all middle and high schools through the Arlington Addiction and Recovery Initiative (AARI).
- APS has made significant investments in youth mental health and substance use over the last two years:
 - Addition of 2.0 substance use counselors, increased the total to 8.0 FTEs
 - Addition of 10.0 intervention counselors
 - Addition of 4.0 dean of students at selected secondary schools
 - Expansion of preventative education and health curriculum to focus on mental health and substance use from grades six through 12
 - Comprehensive Naloxone training for all APS staff
 - Policy allowing self-carry of Naloxone with parent / guardian permission
 - Introduction of on-line therapy for teens via Hazel Health

The County is also responsible for serving our **adult** population who are experiencing substance use and mental health crisis. The growth in cases has been significant; in response, the County has developed new direct intervention programs including the Crisis Intervention Center, development and planned expansion of the Mobile Outreach Support Team (MOST), and the initial phases of Marcus Alert system as

well as regional projects such as the 988 Regional Call Center, expansion of mobile crisis response, and planned development of the Chantilly Crisis Receiving Center (CRC) (May 2024), the Prince William County CRC (2025), and the Loudoun CRC (2026).

Priorities

This proposal is centered on the following priorities:

- ***Focus on Tier 2 / Tier 3 youth in need of intervention***
- ***Complementary investments in prevention & education***
- ***Pilot & evaluation approach*** – We recognize that this crisis has required rapid action and believe that standing up programs as pilots, for an appropriate period, followed by performance review, is the best way to evaluate what works and what does not. This will likely mean that some pilot programs are expanded, downsized, or discontinued. Community support will be important to ensure investments in programs that have the greatest impact in the long run.
- ***Racial equity*** – BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) populations are disproportionately impacted by the substance use crisis. In line with the County Board’s Racial Equity Resolution, this proposal prioritizes these populations with a focus on bilingual services and communication.
- ***Listening to teens and families*** – This proposal was informed by input from numerous sources including informal conversations with teens involved in our programs, the information collected by advocates, ongoing communication with APS leadership including input from school-based administration, and other broader community data such as the Virginia Youth Survey. The proposals for Tier 2 / Tier 3 intervention services were specifically informed by staff’s daily interactions with teens and their families and recognizing the immediate gaps that they face in successfully completing long-term treatment.

As we have evaluated other successful programs in the region and nationally, we recognize that many were created after engaging in a **“whole of community” discussion and planning** process. We propose to do the same in Arlington beginning in fall 2024. This planning process would allow us to ground future proposals in a fulsome set of data, evaluation of risks and clear statement of measurable goals, while still moving forward with immediate pilots whose outcomes will inform this plan. It will also allow our community to reflect on our racial equity goals and post-COVID impacts on Arlington’s youth. The proposed budget includes \$250,000 in one-time funding for the planning process.

Proposed near-term investments across the prevention, intervention, and education spectrum are described below.

Intervention Investments (\$741,000)

The County has started additional programs to provide direct intervention services to teens in crisis. DHS therapists have begun working in high schools over the last few months; a new teen Intensive Outpatient (IOP) program is operational at National Capital Recovery & Treatment; and Virginia Hospital Center is in the process of establishing another IOP for adolescents in need of substance use treatment. We will conduct analysis of these programs, including utilization trends and treatment outcomes, to inform any expansion proposals over the next one-two years. New and expanded investments for intervention efforts include:

- ***Dedicated case management*** (\$300,000 in one-time funding to be spent over FY 2024 and FY 2025) – The nature of acute addiction and mental health issues requires long-term, intensive treatment. Many families, particularly recent Spanish-speaking immigrants, require significant supports to implement treatment plans and address barriers such as transportation, translation, and others. This allocation would fund dedicated bilingual case management to ensure these at-risk youth successfully complete their treatment programs. We believe program execution could best be performed by existing non-profits; we are working on a streamlined procurement to secure this service.
- ***RISE Mentor program expansion*** (\$102,000, 1.0 FTE) – The RISE mentor program, coordinated by JDR, provides intensive mentoring to high risk, older teenagers who are not connected to extracurricular activities or community / faith-based organizations. The current program has a one- to two-year waiting list; adding a full-time coordinator could help expand the program to 50-75 participants.
- ***Augmentation of the Young Achievers and Girls' Outreach Programs*** (\$116,000, two 0.5 FTEs) – These after-school programs serve at-risk, primarily BIPOC youth between the ages of 13-17 who face truancy, addiction, and mental health issues. The Young Achievers program supports young men who are court-involved; the Girls Outreach program supports young women who are typically referred by APS or families. Both programs often have wait-lists. This funding will address the increased complexity of case management for clients, including Spanish interpretation, transportation, and monitoring.
- ***Detention Diversion Probation Counselor*** (\$104,000, 1.0 FTE) - Caseloads for juveniles have increased over the last 12-18 months; the addition of a third probation counselor will allow for intensive daily and remote supervision to ensure appropriate supports are given to clients and their families with the objective of avoiding detention.
- ***Substance Use IOP at the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center (NVJDC)*** – Approximately 50% of youth entering NVJDC face some level of addiction. NVJDC has recently contracted with National Capital Treatment and Recovery to provide a dedicated IOP for up to 30 center residents. This pilot is initially funded with NVJDC reserves; if the program continues, the County's

estimated share of ongoing costs (based on the existing utilization formula) is \$100,000.

Regionally and nationally, the biggest gap in services is the **lack of residential treatment** for teens. Establishing residential treatment services is a multi-year process given the need to secure land, build facilities, and acquire appropriate licensure and regulatory approvals. To address this need, in Arlington, the partnership with VHC Health for a wellness pavilion on the South Carlin Springs Road site includes 24 adolescent behavioral health beds and 12 adolescent substance use treatment beds with a tentative opening timeline of 2026. Regionally, the five Northern Virginia Community Service Boards (CSB) secured a five year multi-million-dollar Opioid Abatement Authority Regional Partnership grant to develop a medical withdrawal program, substance use residential treatment, and crisis services for youth ages 12-17. This project is in the planning stages, and a vigorous search is underway to find an appropriate location in Northern Virginia.

Prevention Investments (\$875,000)

Building Community Resiliency

A key component of our prevention strategy is to ensure that the whole community understands the risk factors for youth and how to connect to services. DHS already leads numerous prevention-oriented programs for families; building on these efforts and in particular on the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)** research and experience, we have developed a multi-pronged approach to rapidly augment community-wide prevention work.

- **Media Campaign** – This campaign would provide broad-based media outreach to the community to raise awareness of risk factors and treatment options.
- **Community Training and Awareness** – This aspect is planned as a “bottom-up” approach to reaching teens and families at risk. Utilizing existing prevention frameworks (including ACES and Mental Health First Aid), training for community-based organizations would be provided and expanded given their reach into our community. Training would also be provided to a broader segment of County employees who interact with youth as part of their daily jobs.

Funding for this program totals \$140,000 in both FY 2024 and FY 2025, with a mix of ongoing and one-time funds. This also includes a 0.5 FTE in DHS for support of these initiatives. In addition, APS has secured a state grant to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid training.

Out of School Programming

Over the last nine months, the County has implemented new and expanded programs to address the demand for additional out-of-school time middle and high school programming including weekends as well as after-school.

- **Weekend Programming** – DPR’s recent focus has been on weekend evenings, a clear gap in teen programming post-COVID and is a risk time of day for teens. To support this staff-intensive programming, in FY 2024, we have allocated \$60,000 in one-time funding and in FY 2025, we are proposing \$74,000 in ongoing funding to ensure continuation of these programs.
 - **Teen Nights** - In summer 2023, with \$95,000 provided by the County Board, DPR began a new teen Saturday night (8-11 pm) program at Arlington Mill. The program’s development was based on teen feedback and evaluation of other jurisdictions’ programs and has been very successful with 100-150 teens typically in attendance. Teen Nights / Teen Takeovers are continuing at different community centers across the County.
 - **Late Night Basketball and Soccer** - In early February, DPR began organized pickup indoor soccer and basketball on Friday and Saturday evenings (9-12 pm) at Arlington Mill for high schoolers. Soccer and basketball are very popular with teens; this programming will augment the County’s existing rec sports programs and APS athletic programs.
- **After-School Programming** – The County and APS offer extensive after-school programming, ranging from clubs, classes, sports, and drop-in programs for middle and high-schoolers. A preliminary inventory [is included](#); the County’s primary weekday programs include:
 - **Gunston & Thomas Jefferson Community Centers** – At the joint use community centers located in Gunston and Thomas Jefferson Middle Schools, the County provides after-school programs for up to 350 teens.
 - **Arlington Mill Drop-In** - The County offers a drop-in program at Arlington Mill that serves 100-150 teens.
 - **NEW Teen Club Pilots** - In partnership with APS, the County recently began piloting once a week teen club programs at Kenmore Middle School and Washington-Liberty High School. Depending on uptake and space availability, these programs may be expanded.

The proposed FY 2025 budget includes additional staff to develop, provide on the ground event management, and perform post-pilot evaluation of new and expanded teen programming. This includes a youth programmer position in DPR (1.0 FTE, \$130,000 ongoing) and funding for temporary staff of \$114,000 (ongoing). As the County and APS have evaluated additional programming, a primary issue is safety and security from a facilities and staffing perspective. Physical space for teen programming must be secure to ensure that teens remain in the programs safely; the design of some schools and community centers do not naturally lend themselves to this requirement. Adequate staffing, with appropriate background checks, for events is also needed, especially as programs grow.

Some of the most popular programs for teens include video gaming, DJ-ing, podcasting, STEM, and other video / media activities. We have allocated one-time funds to fully upgrade the Arlington Mill Media Room (\$147,000 in FY 2024) and to

replace / expand video gaming, laptops and other tech equipment (\$60,000 in FY 2025).

Education and Engagement Investments (\$104,000)

As part of outreach to teens, families, advocates and staff, the County and APS identified near-term gaps in outreach and engagement for existing programming and services:

- **Website and digital strategies** to offer better customer experiences and proactively push information to targeted audiences using existing and new digital tools
- **Exchange of Tools** to elevate and amplify programs and resources between APS and Arlington County Government
- **Outreach** to elevate visibility and engagement opportunities IN the community
- **Language Translation** to help our neighbors who speak other languages access information and resources

One-time funding of \$63,000 in FY 2024 and \$41,000 in FY 2025 has been allocated for these efforts.