

AGENDA



Thursday, December 18, 2008

Health and Human Services
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Item No. 27

Subject: Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Austin Children's Shelter in an amount not to exceed \$180,000, for expansion of shelter capacity to 78 at-risk children.

Amount and Source of Funding: Funding in the amount of \$180,000 is included in the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Operating Budget of the Health and Human Services Department.

Fiscal Note: There is no unanticipated fiscal impact. A fiscal note is not required.

For More Information: Vince Cobalis, Asst. Director, Human Services, 972-5011; Melanie Miller, Chief Financial Officer, 972-5045; Linda Terry, Agenda Coordinator, 972-5023.

Prior Council Action: Council approved the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Operating Budget, September 8, 2008.

The Austin Children's Shelter (ACS) was created in 1984 when a small group of citizens opened a home to care for six neglected or abused children who had nowhere else to go. A decade later, they were able to serve 15 children at a time; and by 1998, the Shelter doubled the number of children served to 30 with the addition of a second home. The ACS vision is that every child in our community will be provided with a safe, sheltering environment and equipped with the tools and resources necessary to live up to their potential. Their stated mission—"To provide emergency shelter, high quality care, and hope to the future to the abandoned, abused, and neglected children of our community"—meets a critical public need in our City.

The safety and security of its residents is a basic need for any community, but particularly for the community's most vulnerable citizens, its children. With its current capacity, ACS turns away far more children on an annual basis than they can serve. With rates of abuse and neglect rising, demand far outstrips capacity and creates a community-wide health and welfare need. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reported an approximate 16 percent increase in confirmed child abuse and/or neglect victims in Austin/Travis County from 2005 to 2007 (1,971 to 2,282). The need for increased capacity impacts the public responsibility to provide a safe environment for our City's neglected and abused children.

ACS is currently building a new facility that will provide emergency shelter, residential treatment care, educational support and family-based services for as many as 78 children at a time. The new facility, on approximately 13 donated acres adjacent to the Robert Mueller Redevelopment Community, will consist of five residential cottages housing children from birth to 17 years of age and three support buildings. The state-of-the-art campus will also provide a centralized location for medical and clinical care, individual and group counseling, family-based services, educational programs, and recreational areas in Central East Austin where demand for these critical services is highest. When completed in mid-2009, the new facility will meet a critical public need in our community.

During the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget process, the Council approved \$180,000 to help fund the planned expansion of the ACS on the donated land next to the former Robert Mueller Airport. The expanded capacity at ACS serves a public purpose by increasing the availability of emergency shelter for

abused and neglected children. The action requested is to allow City Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) to execute a contract for one-time funding to help the ACS expansion effort as approved by the Austin City Council.