



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Recommendation number: 20130807-004: Behavioral Health Education and Awareness Campaign for African Americans.

WHEREAS, the African American Resource Advisory Commission (the “commission”) is authorized by Austin City Code § 2-1-521 to advise the City Council on issues related to the quality of life for the City’s African American community; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is specifically authorized to recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront African Americans in social, economic, and vocational pursuits, including (1) health care; (2) housing, including affordable housing, home ownership, and homelessness; (3) entertainment opportunities for professionals and students; (4) employment; and (5) cultural venues, including museums, theaters, art galleries, and music venues; and

WHEREAS, one in four adults experience a diagnosable mental illness in a given year;

WHEREAS, six percent of adults have a serious mental illness;

WHEREAS, nearly half of all adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in their lifetime;

WHEREAS, the median age of onset for mental illness is eleven and the median age of onset for addictive disorder is twenty one;

WHEREAS, 38%-51% of people with lifetime addictions also have a mental illness;

WHEREAS, 30% of adults with mental illness reported binge alcohol use;

WHEREAS, 10% of adults with mental illness reported heavy alcohol use;

WHEREAS, substance abuse may occur as an unintended consequence of self-medication;

WHEREAS, In FY 2012 Austin Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC) served 18,000 people with behavioral health needs and African Americans represented 16% of those receiving specialized services;

WHEREAS, the number of African Americans in Austin Travis County Integral Care’s (ATCIC) services year to date in FY 2013 (September 1, 2012 through May 31, 2013) who experienced mental health issues was 3,668; and this is 26.78% of the people (13,695) who have received services through Integral Care this year; and the number of African Americans in ATCIC services who had co-occurring disorders (mental health and substance use) was 207 people; and this is 20.74% of the people (998) who have received services through ATCIC so far this year; and the number of African Americans in ATCIC services who had substance use issues



(single diagnosis) was 148 people; and this number is 18.39% of the people (805) who have received substance use services so far this year; and

WHEREAS, African American communities do not have adequate access to mental and behavioral health treatment because of various barriers such as lack of knowledge of about available interventions, transportation difficulties, competing familial responsibilities such as child care, family privacy and shame; and

WHEREAS, mental health and behavioral health are important to the Commission as we understand that in order to support a strong mental health system, education and outreach to our African American community must occur; the Commission recognizes that self-medication is an unintended consequence of undetected mental health problems; the Commission acknowledges that without a strong mental health system communities suffer through lost employment, job absenteeism, increased involvement with law enforcement, and increased hospital costs; and the Commission is determined to support an effective outreach program in the community and increase the knowledge of available resources.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR:

An education and awareness campaign to provide information to the community about self-medicating, behavioral and mental health. The Commission recommends this be accomplished through a designated financial investment as follows:

- Media campaign with public service announcements for television, radio and public broadcasting networks;
- Printed materials for distribution where the public may obtain them free of charge; and
- A request for proposal for a non-profit organization to conduct outreach and provide education to the community to increase their awareness and overcome barriers for treatment.

Date of approval: August 7, 2013

Record of the vote: 7-0 (Unanimous)

Attest: _____

Melodye Foust, Staff Liaison