



Montgomery County Government

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

REPORT #81-3

NOVEMBER 10, 1981

TITLE

An Evaluation of the review process used to determine the County's need to continue the grant funded Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) Program with County funds.

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EXHIBITS

I. SUMMARY AND MAJOR CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The County Government's decision to pursue, review and approve the acceptance of funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and establish the Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) program in the Health Department was well organized and deliberate. The TASC program was established with specific goals and objectives to be used in measuring the program's effectiveness and specific attention was given to the importance of evaluating the TASC program in order to justify the continuation after the LEAA grant funds were terminated.

The major conclusion and recommendation of this evaluation are:

1. The review process which led to a decision to continue the TASC program ignored the consultant's report of the first year of the program and the requirement for an evaluation prior to continuing the TASC program into FY 82.
2. The Office of Management and Budget should establish policies and procedures to assure timely evaluation of all grant funded programs, especially those being considered for continuation with County funds.

II. AUTHORITY, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

1. Authority. Council Resolution 9-954, subject: FY 81 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight, adopted September 9, 1980.

2. Scope. This evaluation examines the process that was established by the County Council when accepting the two year LEAA grant funded TASC program to assure that an evaluation would be performed prior to making any decision on whether to continue the TASC program with full County funding. The merits of the TASC program are not within the scope of this evaluation.

3. Methodology. This evaluation was conducted through a review of the grant applications and related documentation, information was obtained from interviews, reading the minutes of Council worksessions, reviewing accounting and budget data and the consultant's evaluation of the TASC program.

III. BACKGROUND, FACTS AND DISCUSSION

A Brief Description of the TASC Program

1. The Health Department's Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) program was established in mid-1979 with grant funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). At the time the TASC program was established, it was understood that LEAA grant funds would be available to fund the program for only the first two years.

2. The long-range goal of the TASC program was to reduce the recidivism rate of drug offenders by establishing a link between the Criminal Justice System and health care/treatment agencies in order to divert drug abuse offenders into treatment and rehabilitation. To achieve this long-range goal, the TASC program was designed with three objectives: screen the substance abuse offender to assess the individual's problems and needs, refer the individual to appropriate treatment and monitor the individual's progress during treatment.

The County Government's Decision to Pursue, Receive
and Approve LEAA Funds for the TASC Program

3. Interest in the TASC program began when the County's Office of Drug Control notified the Health Department of the availability of LEAA funds for a specialized treatment program for drug addicted criminals. The Health Department thoroughly examined the program, to include sending a Health Department employee to a National TASC Conference, and concluded that the program had merit and federal funds should be sought.

4. The Health Department prepared an application for the grant, which the County Executive approved, and submitted it to LEAA in January 1978. In addition, a request was sent to LEAA for a visit by the TASC Technical Assistance Team. Prior to the Team's visit, the Health Department contacted representatives of the Criminal Justice System to gain their support and formed a TASC Committee to establish working relationships between the Criminal Justice System, the Health Department and the various private health care/treatment agencies.

5. The grant application was approved by LEAA and the County was awarded the first year grant in mid-1978. In September 1978, the County Executive recommended the approval of a Supplemental Appropriation to operate the TASC program for the remaining 8-1/2 months of FY 79 (Oct 78 - Jun 79).

6. During the public hearing and the Council's worksession regarding the Supplemental Appropriation, the issue concerning the continuation of the TASC program after the expiration of the LEAA grant in two years was discussed. On November 17, 1978, Council Resolution No. 8-2280, Supplemental Appropriation, Department of Health, Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC), was approved. The second Resolved clause in the Resolution requested the County Executive "...to provide an evaluation report for this program no later than March 1981, so that the County Council can evaluate the need for 100% local funding for fiscal year 1982 and beyond." (See Exhibit A.)

7. The total expenditure on the TASC program in this first year of the LEAA grant, from mid-1978 to June 1979 was \$352,873 of which \$281,747 was LEAA grant funded and \$71,126 was County funded.

The First Year Evaluation

8. From the very beginning specific attention was given to the importance of evaluating the TASC program. The original grant proposal identified the goals and objectives to be used in measuring the program's effectiveness (See Exhibit B.) The provisions of the LEAA grant required that each TASC program be evaluated by an independent consultant and the first year grant award included \$15,000 in operating expense for consultant services. On the TASC program staff (all TASC staff were career conditional employees) was a research analyst with responsibility for developing the program evaluation design, including data collection procedures and forms. Finally, as mentioned above, Council Resolution

No. 8-2280 required an evaluation of the TASC program be performed and reported to Council prior to March 1981.

9. A County request for proposals to evaluate the TASC program resulted in three formal bids. The ECTA Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was selected, primarily because the consultant staff had conducted evaluations of other TASC programs. The contract with ECTA to evaluate the TASC program for \$14,920 was approved in November 1979.

10. In June 1980, the ECTA Corporation issued a report entitled, Final Report: Evaluation of Montgomery County Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime. The evaluation covered the TASC program's operations from July 1, 1979 through March 1980 and discussed TASC's client characteristics, a cost analysis and TASC's relationships and impacts on the Criminal Justice System and health care/treatment agencies.

11. Although the 80 page report discusses the TASC program in great detail, the evaluation is almost void of any conclusions as to the effectiveness of the TASC program in meeting its primary goal. The principal finding in the report is as follows:

"In sum, it is unlikely that the Montgomery County Criminal Justice System can be further impacted on by TASC. Over 80 percent of all individuals convicted in District Court will receive a non-incarcerated sentence, and 85 percent of all defendants are released from custody pretrial. TASC's potential impact is further reduced by the fact that a large proportion of those individuals incarcerated (post-trial) or detained (pretrial) are District of Columbia residents and, therefore, not eligible for TASC. Recent jail statistics show no change in either the overall jail population or the percentage of pretrial detainee among that population. TASC's potential impact on Probation is limited to a time savings in individual cases--no change in caseload size because of TASC is likely. However, any impact must await the development of a fully cooperative working relationship between these agencies. If TASC succeeds in increasing its visibility and credibility within Circuit Court, it may impact significantly on the more serious cases handled in this forum through a reduction in the sentenced and pretrial detained jail populations." (Final Report:

Evaluation of Montgomery County Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime
p. 5-3.)

12. The value of this finding is questionable because the evaluation covers only the start up period of the TASC Program, utilizes data collected over a short period of the program's existence and recognizes the long range concentration of the program. It is not known how the Health Department used this report, for it was received by the Health Department in September 1980; but for some reason it was not forwarded to the County Council until April 1981, one week before the Council's worksession on the Health Department's FY 82 budget which included an Executive recommendation to continue the TASC program with full County funding.

The Second Year Evaluation

13. When the County submitted the grant application for second year funding to LEAA it included an evaluation plan for Montgomery County TASC's second year operations. The scope of the evaluation included TASC's relationship with and impact on the Criminal Justice System and health care/treatment agencies, a client outcome analysis and a cost analysis. Since the staff research analyst was to be responsible for conducting the client outcome and cost analyses, only \$3,000 was requested and approved as operating expense for consultant services in performing the second year evaluation. In this second year of the TASC program, July 1980 - June 1981, a total \$296,439 was expended of which \$250,000 was LEAA grant funded and \$46,439 was County funded.

14. In the early stages of preparing the FY 82 Operating Budget, the Health Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) discussed the continuation of the TASC program in light of the known expiration date of the LEAA grant. The Health Department recommended continuation of the program with full County funding and the TASC Project Advisory Board (the out growth of the original TASC Committee) supported continuation. The final decision of those concerned, including OMB, was to continue the TASC program. Thus the County Executive's Recommended FY 82 Operating Budget included County funding in the amount of \$272,330 for the TASC program. The County Council, after restoring funds for a TASC staff position which had been eliminated in the Executive's budget, approved the funds for the continuation of the TASC program.

15. At no time during the entire budget review process is there evidence of any discussion concerning the first year's evaluation report of the TASC Program or the need for a second year evaluation before deciding on 100% local funding of the TASC program. In fact, the Health Department requested in June 1981, permission from LEAA to cancel the second year evaluation. As justification for cancelling the evaluation the Health Department noted that the TASC program had been adversely affected by staff turnovers and unfilled vacancies and the resignation of the staff research analyst in January 1981, with the resulting loss of data collection capability. However, the most unique reason cited for not conducting an evaluation of the TASC program was that County funds to continue the program had been approved and "...thus, the need to have the evaluation to assist in the program's continuation is now moot."

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The County Government's decision to pursue, review and approve the acceptance of LEAA funds and establish the TASC program was well organized and deliberate.

2. The TASC program was established with specific goals and objectives to be used in measuring the program's effectiveness.

3. In addition to the grant agency's specific attention to the

importance of evaluating the TASC program, the County Council, in approving the initial Supplemental Appropriation for the TASC program, directed an evaluation prior to March 1981 so as to be able to evaluate the program's need for 100% local funding for FY 82 and beyond.

4. The review process which led to a decision to continue the TASC program ignored the consultant's report of the first year of the program and the requirement for an evaluation prior to continuing the TASC program into FY 82.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Department of Health should evaluate both the need to continue the TASC program and the effectiveness and efficiency of the program before recommending the continuation of the TASC program for FY 83.

2. The Office of Management and Budget should establish policies and procedures to assure timely evaluation of all grant funded programs, especially those being considered for continuation with County funds. The procedures should include the development of alternatives for providing the services.

VI. AGENCY/DEPARTMENT COMMENTS AND OLO RESPONSE.

Before submitting this report to the Council, a draft copy was sent to the County Executive; Chief Administrative Officer; Director, Office of Management and Budget and Director, Department of Health. Official comments were received from the Chief Administrative Officer and are presented on the following page.

1. Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer:

M E M O R A N D U M

October 20, 1981

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

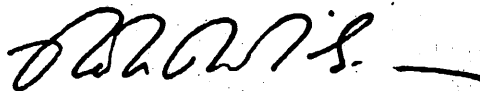
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: OLO Draft Report #81-3 - Review Process for Local Funding
of the Health Department "TASC" Program

This draft report has been reviewed by the Acting Director of the Health Department and the Director of Management and Budget. We thank Legislative Oversight for calling to our attention a number of defects in the process leading to approval of TASC as a locally funded program. The report's recommendations are valid. FY 82 funding of TASC was discussed and approved within the Health Department, but no formal evaluation was produced. OMB performed a normal budget review, but also did not generate a comprehensive study of TASC. We will issue such an analysis for use during the FY 83 budget deliberations.

The Executive Branch has taken steps to improve the grants process. Attached are copies of revised administrative procedures (10/20/80) for grant applications, as well as an August 10, 1981 Memo from the CAO to All Departments and Agencies, identifying steps to be taken when there are program revenue reductions in any form. We feel these documents address the recommendations and concerns contained in the OLO study, and we will do our best to see that their purpose is fulfilled.

RWW:zr



Attachments (2)

2. OLO Response:

OLO was aware of the two documents the CAO references: Administrative Procedure 7-1, Grant Application and Supporting Assistance and the memorandum dated August 10, 1981, subject: Response to Federal/State Budget Cuts; Procedures. These documents establish procedures and administrative processes for receiving grants and for responding to Federal and State budget cuts. However, they do not explicitly address the issue of timely evaluating all grant funded programs, especially those being considered for continuation with County funds. Therefore, OLO is encouraged that the Chief Administrative Officer has concurred in the validity of this report's recommendation that the Office of Management and Budget establish procedures to assure timely evaluations of all grant funded programs.