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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES PLAN ALLOWING CHA AND CDPH TO HELP PREVENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG CHICAGO YOUTH

Partnership Will Work to Deter Youth From Participating in High-Risk Behavior Through Education and Prevention Services

City Council today approved an ordinance that will allow the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to provide substance abuse prevention and educational services for CHA residents.

This proposed agreement would benefit all Chicagoans, specifically Chicago's youth. The ultimate goal is to deter youth from engaging in high-risk behavior and decreasing their exposure to alcohol and drugs.

"One of the clearest ways to prevent substance abuse later in life is to provide education and resources to individuals to make healthier choices early in life," said CDPH Commissioner Bechara Choucair, M.D. "This initiative is part of our comprehensive efforts to help ensure Chicago's children are the healthiest children in the nation."

The programs will provide evidence-based youth substance abuse prevention and education services to CHA youth, and will offer a menu of age-appropriate and culturally-sensitive substance-abuse education workshops and programs for youth and their parents.

"Above all else, we must protect and cherish our youth, and the best way to do that is to create healthy, positive avenues by which they will prosper and excel, providing them confidence and focus," CHA CEO Charles Woodyard said. "As part of our new strategic plan, 'Plan Forward,' CHA is expanding services to more residents and providing targeted services to residents at critical milestones in their lives."

Program focal points will include developing communication skills, resiliency behavior, preventing risky behavior, peer and media pressure resistance and effective self-management skills.

The Agreement is also aimed toward proactively preventing youth violence in the City of Chicago, since there is a strong correlation between alcohol, drug use and violence.

The CHA, through an RFP process, will select community-based agencies to provide the services. CHA will compile and analyze pre- and post-test results from the three pilot youth substance abuse prevention programs implemented in 2012 to provide an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of each pilot and determine which evidence based model will be expanded in 2013.

CDPH will provide \$80,000 in funding which will be matched by the CHA for a total of \$160,000 for this initiative.

CHA and CDPH will also continue to partner in circulating information about important health issues, including childhood obesity, respiratory health, seasonal influenza and changes in access to healthcare.

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