SUBJECT: Request to convert Psychologist position to a Psychological Associate position - Child and Adolescent Services (BOH07010) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Health approve a reallocation of existing funds from a 0.4 FTE Psychologist position to a 0.6 FTE Psychological Associate position within Child and Adolescent Services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Child and Adolescent Services, Family Health Division, Public Health Services is an outpatient children’s mental health centre that is 100% funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This program provides counselling to over 700 children, youth and their families in the City of Hamilton each year. Lack of provincial funding over the past two decades has led to a reduction of FTE from a high of 28.32 FTE in 1988 to the current level of 17.6 FTE. The current Psychologist position will be vacant in April 2007 due to attrition. This vacancy creates an opportunity to convert the existing 0.4 FTE Psychologist position to a 0.6 FTE Psychological Associate position. This would increase total complement by 0.2 FTE and redirect the function of psychological services from consultation to direct service and remain within existing budget.
BACKGROUND:

Child and Adolescent Services, Family Health Division, Public Health Services is an outpatient children’s mental health centre that is 100% funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This program provides counselling to over 700 children, youth and their families in the City of Hamilton each year. Lack of provincial funding over the past two decades has led to a reduction of FTE from a high of 28.32 FTE in 1988 to the current level of 17.6 FTE. Historically, under the rules of the Ontario College of Psychologists, Master’s level psychology personnel required the supervision of a doctoral level staff. This is no longer the case as Psychological Associates can work independently in their areas of expertise. The Psychologist consultant position is therefore no longer required.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The current 0.4 FTE Psychologist position is budgeted at $75,000 per year while a 0.6 FTE Psychological Associate would be budgeted at approximately $41,800 per year. The net result would be a saving of $33,200 while realizing an actual 0.6 FTE increase in direct service capacity. This change will increase capacity for direct service provision resulting in decreased waiting time for clients. The result of the addition of a direct service position versus a consultation position is that approximately 40-60 more families will receive service and the waiting period for psychological testing would be significantly decreased. We currently have a part time Psychological Associate, on staff. With this additional position, we will be able to provide full time coverage. There have been minimal increases to the Child & Adolescent budget over the last 10 years and there is no capacity to absorb any further increases to salaries and wages without reducing staff complement. The savings of $33,200 will be used to offset anticipated maintenance costs associated with the CUPE JE process and annual salary increases for 2007/2008.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

We could continue within the existing model which would maintain waiting times for clients at approximately three months for Psychological services. The proposed plan should reduce waiting times. If we do not set aside additional dollars for anticipated increases to salaries and wages in 2007/2008, there is the potential that the approved budget will be insufficient to cover these costs. This may result in a need for staff reductions which would impact negatively on service levels.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications for the City as this change is being done within existing funding. The current Psychologist position will be vacant in April due to attrition creating an opportunity to post the 0.6 Psychological Associate position with no other staff layoff.
POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

This change would be done in a manner consistent with the CUPE 5167 collective agreement and Ministry of Children and Youth Services funding guidelines. Not having a Psychologist will mean we can no longer provide placements for senior level doctoral students who require a PHD level supervisor. We will still be able to provide placements for first and second year level doctoral students who can be supervised by a Psychological Associate.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Finance and Administration have been consulted as to the proposed change. Consultation with Human Resources regarding the change in position is currently underway. We will advise the local office of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services of the change in FTE once the Board of Health approval is received.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Public services and programs are delivered in an equitable manner, coordinated, efficient, effective and easily accessible to all citizens.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☑ No

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☐ Yes ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No