



STAFF REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council
From the City Manager

DATE: January 25, 2021

SUBJECT

Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership between the City of Daly City, City of Redwood City, City of San Mateo, City of South San Francisco, and the County of San Mateo

RECOMMENDATION

Approve a two-year agreement authorizing the City through the Redwood City Police Department to collaborate with Daly City, San Mateo, South San Francisco (The Cities) through their police departments, and the County of San Mateo through Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), in the formation of a mental health partnership crisis response program, at a total cost over the two year span of \$156,182, and authorize the City Manager to execute the Memorandum of Understanding in substantially the form presented.

STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Public Safety

BACKGROUND

National events have highlighted community needs related to individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis. Historically, due to a lack of behavioral health resources and services on an around the clock basis, law enforcement personnel were tasked as first responders to individuals experiencing such crisis. Annually the Redwood City Police Department responds to approximately 315 calls for service which involve someone with a connection to mental illness. This deficit in resources has limited the level and quality of care that a person in crisis receives and can further strain the relationship between law enforcement and the community. Lastly, linking persons with mental health diagnoses to the justice system is often ineffective, inefficient and would be more appropriately resolved through the behavioral health care system.

In Redwood City's community engagement regarding racial equity and policing in 2020, many residents called upon the City to consider alternative service delivery models, particularly related to calls involving individuals experiencing mental health crisis. Developing such models is challenging for mid-size cities such as Redwood City, as cities do not typically employ mental health professionals and sharing the cost of a new service with other entities is cost-efficient, a particularly important consideration in light of contracting revenues.

City staff contacted the County and other cities to assess their interest in a multi-agency collaboration for responding to calls involving those in mental health crisis. The cities of Daly City, San Mateo, and South San Francisco expressed interest in developing a new model in partnership with Redwood City and the County. Recognizing the importance of having an independent assessment of program effectiveness, Redwood City staff encouraged partner agencies to work with the John Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities at Stanford University to establish research measures and report on program effectiveness. Redwood City staff shared periodic updates on this effort through the summer and fall. The City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Policing recommended participation in the pilot program at the October 5, 2020 study session on Racial Equity, City Services and Policing, and on October 26, 2020, the City Council approved staff's recommendation to allocate \$200,000 for Fiscal Year 2020-21 to fund a Pilot Program in partnership with San Mateo County and other cities. Based on this direction, staff worked with partner agencies to develop the Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team (CWCRT), a pilot program with San Mateo County Behavior Health to partner mental health clinicians with police officers responding to crisis calls.

ANALYSIS

The CWCRT program is a partnership between the police departments of The Cities, and the County of San Mateo, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), created to optimally respond to individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis. This collaboration is designed to increase the ability to directly respond to community members in mental health crisis; enhance response times for those in need of mental health services and resources; and create a broader and more effective continuum of care for individuals and families undergoing crisis.

The CWCRT program will embed a BHRS clinician within the Redwood City Police Department, utilizing historical data to determine an appropriate work schedule. The clinician will partner with officers and related service providers to expand the capacity to respond via a co-response model of law enforcement and mental health clinicians. The response model calls for the clinician to respond in tandem with Redwood City police officers to incidents where a mental health crisis is occurring. Once the scene is safe, a determination will be made regarding the commission of crime. For non-criminal matters, the law enforcement presence will be minimized and the clinician will assume responsibility for the individual in crisis. The clinician will assess client needs, ensure appropriate action is taken and connect the individual with the appropriate service providers. For incidents involving criminal matters, law enforcement personnel will maintain responsibility but will collaborate with the clinician to determine the optimal outcome. In addition to responding to calls for service, the clinician will also provide on-going training to Redwood City Police Department personnel in the area of behavioral health, crisis response, and de-escalation.

The CWCRT Program has identified goals and objectives, which include the following:

- Improved outcomes for individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis
- Increased access to appropriate resources
- Increased and improved training and collaboration between BHRS and law enforcement staff
- Strengthened relationships between law enforcement, behavioral health service providers, and the community.

Additionally, the CWCRT Program will measure and report regularly on its effectiveness in achieving identified outcomes, including residential stability, improved mental health, reduced use of acute and emergency services, and reduced contact with the criminal justice system. To accomplish this, the County and Cities have partnered with the John W. Gardner Center of Stanford University. The Gardner Center will conduct regular data analysis to determine the program’s effectiveness, assess outcomes, and consider appropriate adjustments. The data and corresponding analysis will be shared both publically and with the parties to facilitate informed decision making about the program’s continuation. At the conclusion of the two-year term, a determination will be made regarding continuation of the program.

The Program was developed after exploring multiple models in other cities and is expected to evolve in response to data and experience. At the October 5, 2020 City Council meeting the City Council asked staff to move toward a model where the mental health clinician may be able to respond directly to a call without the participation of a law enforcement officer, especially if the mental health clinicians are known to the person in crisis (i.e., if the mental health clinician has had frequent and multiple contacts with a person). At the request of Redwood City staff, the Memorandum of Understanding includes a provision to discuss program evolution with this goal in mind.

FISCAL IMPACT

Per the attached Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the County and Cities will share the total program costs, which amount to \$615,492 in FY 2021/22, and \$633,956 in FY 2022/23. The County will pay for half of these costs, and each individual City will pay for one quarter of the remaining cost (or one eighth of the total program cost). This results in the City of Redwood City paying \$76,937 in FY 21/22, and \$79,245 in FY 22/23. This cost is shown below in Figure 1, with cost-of-living adjustments resulting in higher costs for year 2 when compared to year 1.

Fig 1: Program Costs

	FY21/22	FY22/23
Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Program (City of Redwood City Share)	\$76, 937	\$79,245

The County will fully cover the personnel cost, and then bill Redwood City for the City’s portion of the cost. City funding will come from the General Fund and will be included in the proposed fiscal year 2021-2022 City budget. Funding for the portion of the program that occurs within fiscal year 2020-2021 was provided with the Revised Budget approved on October 25, 2020.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This activity is not a project under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as defined in CEQA Guidelines, section 15378, because it has no potential for resulting in either a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. Staff also arranged a meeting with community members and San Mateo County Behavioral Health Services Director Scott Gilman to answer questions about the proposed program.

ALTERNATIVES

The City Council can choose not to move forward with this partnership and direct staff to continue with the status quo or return the item to staff for consideration of other mental health program models.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Memorandum of Understanding

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