



CITY OF COSTA MESA

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

File #: 24-322

Meeting Date: 9/3/2024

TITLE:

RESPONSE TO 2023-2024 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT "LAW ENFORCEMENT'S RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH CALLS FOR SERVICE"

DEPARTMENT: POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTED BY: JOYCE LAPOINTE, POLICE DEPUTY CHIEF

CONTACT INFORMATION: JOYCE LAPOINTE, 714-754-5663

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve and file the response letter to the 2023-2024 Orange County Grand Jury (OCGJ) Report "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service".

BACKGROUND:

On May 30, 2024, the City was sent a copy of the 2023-2024 OCGJ report, the title being "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service" (Attachment 1). The focus of the report was law enforcement's response to mental health calls for service in Orange County. The attached report is marked "Confidential," however, it was only confidential until June 5, 2024, when the report was released to the public.

Due to litigation resulting from negative outcomes from law enforcement's response to mental health calls for service, the Orange County Grand Jury felt it vital to research how Orange County assists individuals who suffer from mental health illness. Their research included interviews with law enforcement leaders, law enforcement educators, and mental health professionals throughout Orange County.

The report identifies five findings and one recommendation (p. 14 of 20 of report). California Penal Code Section 933 requires the city to provide a response to each of the findings and recommendations in the report. California Penal Code Section 933.05 specifies the exact manner in which the responses and comments on the findings and recommendations are to be made. The responses must be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by September 4, 2024.

Costa Mesa's Comprehensive System of Care

In addition to the City's law enforcement personnel who respond to mental health calls for service, the City of Costa Mesa has developed a comprehensive system of care to address homelessness, including resources and services for those facing mental health challenges. This system of care can be broken down into the three (3) distinct focus areas: Outreach and Engagement, Emergency

Shelter, and Supportive Housing.

1. Outreach and Engagement - The City employs a team of eight (8) Community Outreach Workers to meet people where they are and assist in the removal of barriers to health (including behavioral health), employment, and housing. The Outreach Team annually engages approximately 200 unhoused individuals and, since 2019, has successfully housed over 200 clients. Outreach Workers are highly skilled in de-escalation and trauma-informed care techniques, which are proven to reduce negative encounters.
 - On August 12, 2024, the City became the second municipality in Orange County to implement CalOptima Health's innovative Street Medicine Program, which brings primary and behavioral health care to the unhoused members of our community. Celebrating Life Community Health Center (CLCHC), the agency selected by CalOptima Health to administer Street Medicine in Costa Mesa, will operate their mobile medical office Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 3 pm. Enrollees will have direct access to behavioral health clinicians, medications, individual/group therapy, and case management services to improve overall outcomes for the unhoused.
2. Emergency Shelter - The City owns and operates a 100-bed emergency and navigation shelter known as the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter. The Shelter provides emergency housing and associated services to over 200 individuals annually. Since opening its doors in April 2021, the Shelter has successfully housed 125 individuals.
 - On March 27, 2024, the City executed an MOU with the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA) for an award of \$3.5 million to add 15 more beds to the shelter and augment behavioral health care services provided at the Shelter. The award also funded a new full-time Case Worker with expertise in managing both mental health and substance use challenges, plus implementation of weekly visits from an OCHCA behavioral health clinician to address mental health and substance use challenges.
3. Permanent Supportive Housing - Over the past two (2) years, the City Council has allocated \$9,850,000 from Federal American Rescue Plan funds, and restricted housing funds to assist in the development of permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness, many of whom face mental health challenges.
 - In 2022, the City Council awarded \$5,850,000 to Community Development Partners to convert the Motel 6 at 2275 Newport Blvd into 86 units of supportive and affordable housing. Ten (10) of these units are set-aside for occupancy by individuals eligible to receive care under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Phase 1 of this project was completed in early 2024 and all ten (10) MHSA units are currently occupied.
 - In 2023, the City Council awarded \$4,000,000 to American Family Housing to convert the Travelodge at 1400 Bristol Ave into 76 units of supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness.

When complete, the project will provide permanent housing and a robust system of wrap-around services, including assistance for those facing mental health challenges. This project is estimated to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2025.

ANALYSIS:

Staff has prepared draft responses below for the City Council's consideration. The draft response letter to the Grand Jury is provided as Attachment 2.

OCGJ Findings and City Responses

F1 Mental health training for law enforcement officers in Orange County exceeds the State's requirements, resulting in law enforcement applying these skills to better evaluate and handle mental health calls for service.

Response - Agree

F2 Law enforcement agencies in Orange County have developed unique ways to deal with mental health calls in their communities based on their needs and budgets, enabling law enforcement to better serve their communities.

Response - Agree

F3 Law enforcement collaboration with County PERT clinicians and Be Well mobile response units has been an effective tool when responding to mental health calls for service.

Response - Agree

F4 People with mental illness respond more positively to "soft uniformed" police personnel, which can be effective in de-escalating situations.

Response - Agree

F5 Providing follow-up case management is not only necessary but critical for the wellbeing of people experiencing mental health issues.

Response - Agree

Recommendation

R1 Based on its investigation, the 2023-2024 OCGJ has determined that law enforcement agencies throughout Orange County have developed unique techniques to adequately address mental health calls, thus this report does not contain recommendations.

Response: Agree with findings - no recommendations.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council has the options to receive and file the Police Department's response to the recommendations or provide alternative direction.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this item.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this report and the agreement and approved them as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goal: Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve the Quality of Life.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve the response to findings and recommendation in the 2023-2024 Orange County Grand Jury Report "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service" which would authorize the City to send a response letter to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.