

Alternatives to Law Enforcement for Crisis Response

On March 4, 2020, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously approved the motion “Crisis Response Coordination” by Supervisor Janice Hahn and Supervisor Kathryn Barger. The motion authorized the Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to consider using a steering committee, the Health and Human Services Crisis Response Coordination Steering Committee, composed of various health, fire, and law enforcement agencies to advise DMH on the development, expansion, coordination, and utilization of health and human services crisis response resources throughout Los Angeles County (County). Accordingly, the Director of DMH is creating and will be convening such an important steering committee.

Since then, the tragic killings of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks have drawn renewed national attention to the ways that encounters with law enforcement can escalate and turn fatal. While there are instances when law enforcement officers are the most appropriate response to a call for help, there are also many scenarios when they are

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

not. For example, calls for health and human services crises related to mental health, substance abuse, physical health, or homelessness would be better served in most cases by a non-law enforcement response team with appropriate training and expertise, like the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT) or the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Emergency Outreach Team. However, when people call for help during a crisis, they often call 911 and receive a law enforcement response that could be ineffective at best and harmful at worst. LA County residents need to have the option to call for a crisis response that they know will not send law enforcement officers as the default, but will instead triage their call to the appropriate trained and unarmed response.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors authorize the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to collaborate with its Health and Human Services Crisis Response Coordination Steering Committee to explore ways for Los Angeles County residents to call a number that is supported by and provides access to a consolidated health and human services crisis response where law enforcement will not be the first responder, consistent with and building off of the recommendations in the Alternatives to Incarceration Workgroup's "Care First, Jail Last" March 2020 report, to be incorporated within the prior report back to now be submitted within 3 months. The report shall also include exploring the feasibility of:

1. Establishing a unique number for non-law enforcement health and human services crisis responses;
2. Reconfiguring 911 to more effectively triage calls involving health and human services crises to non-law enforcement first responders by default.

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JH: kc