

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

April 19, 2022

AND HOLLY MITCHELL

**Permanent Funding and Implementation of the Family Assistance Program**

Upon the recommendation of the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC), on July 9, 2019, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) created the Family Assistance Program (FAP) <sup>1</sup> The FAP was created to provide support for grieving families and “aimed at improving compassionate communication and providing trauma-informed support to families of those whose lives were lost while in custody or following an encounter with Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) personnel.”<sup>2</sup> Key elements of FAP include family advocates being present during next-of-kin notifications to provide crisis intervention and mental health first aid, and system navigation throughout the process to help survivors access resources provided by the County and community-based organizations. In addition, the FAP provides up to

<sup>1</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/128116.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://oig.lacounty.gov/Portals/OIG/Reports/First%20Semi-Annual%20Report%20Back%20on%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Family%20Assistance%20Program.pdf?ver=wBB4OICYCINpSrDWvbvjhw%3d%3d>

MOTION

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\$7,500, at the request of families, to alleviate some of the financial hardship of burial costs, which would otherwise compound the emotional trauma caused by the unexpected and tragic loss of a loved one.

Identifying sustainable funding for this program, which started as a pilot program in 2019, is fundamental to the County's commitment to helping these families and survivors. As past motions demonstrate, the Board is unwavering in its support for a comprehensive, permanent FAP with sustainable funding:

- In April 2021, Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Holly J. Mitchell requested \$4 million to support FAP in their respective American Rescue Plan proposals to the Chief Executive Office (CEO).
- On May 4, 2021, the Board unanimously approved Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Holly J. Mitchell's "Protecting Surviving families from Law Enforcement Harassment and Retaliation" motion<sup>3</sup> directing the CEO to identify sustainable funding for FAP and report back during the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Supplemental Budget Phase.
- On July 27, 2021, the Board approved Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Holly J. Mitchell's "Taking Action: Further Protections for Surviving Families from Law Enforcement Harassment and Retaliation"<sup>4</sup> motion, directing the CEO to identify ongoing funding necessary to continue FAP in the Supplemental Budget.
- On October 19, 2021, the Board unanimously approved Supervisor Hilda L.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/158009.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/160375.pdf>

Solis' "Permanent Support for Families Affected by LA County Sheriff's Department: Identifying Sustainable Funding for and Streamlining the Family Assistance Program"<sup>5</sup> motion directing the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in consultation and collaboration with other County Departments to develop an implementation plan, budget, and timeline for a permanent FAP.

Additionally, the motion directed the CEO to identify and report back on a sustainable funding source for the permanent program and identify \$100,000 in bridge funding with a temporary administrator of the funds to continue the program for affected families until a long-term funding source identified.

Clearly, the Board has approved several motions for FAP and now it is the time to act. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG), in collaboration with the COC, the Department of Public Health Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), and in consultation with other County Departments, prepared a report back to the Board on February 22, 2022<sup>6</sup> including recommendations built on lessons learned and community feedback to make FAP permanent. This report included a design and implementation plan, a proposed annual budget, a data tracking system, a plan for quickly processing payments to affected families for burial assistance, and a recommendation for managing transition of FAP while a sustainable long-term funding source was being identified.

The report outlined several administrative and logistical challenges of the FAP pilot, namely the lack of institutionalized funding to build proper infrastructure, a need for

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<sup>5</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/162775.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/162874.pdf>

a trauma and healing informed holistic approach, a county/community staffing model, and additional feedback from community stakeholder indicating the urgent need for this program and increased communication to elevate awareness about this program.

Despite challenges, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the administrator of the pilot, was “able to provide financial and emotional support through FAP to dozens of families experiencing traumatic loss, and families receiving this assistance uniformly appreciated the services provided.”<sup>7</sup>

The report also outlined a program design for a permanent FAP that would build on the foundation established by DMH and its partners and transition the program to OVP as part of a holistic, survivor-centered, and community-driven violence prevention approach. The proposed design uses a hybrid model that incorporates an OVP in-house team of mental health clinicians, paired with a contract with a trusted CBO. The design will leverage other OVP staff and community-based resources, including the Crisis Response Violence Intervention Program, which is being piloted in the Second District and the Trauma Prevention Initiative, which expanded to nine communities across the County in 2022. The report also recommended allocating dedicated staff at the Department of Medical Examiner Coroner (DMEC) to build its capacity to provide next-of-kin notifications to families in FAP in lieu of delegating this process to the Sheriff’s Department. OVP would work closely with FAP county and community partners to develop training on protocols and trauma-informed communication to

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<sup>7</sup> <https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/c810036b-6813-4b46-bc34-ace8cb92df0d/REPORT%20BACK%20ON%20PERMANENT%20SUPPORT%20FOR%20FAMILIES%20AFFECTED%20BY%20LOS%20ANGELES%20COUNTY%20SHERIFFS%20DEPARTMENT.pdf>

grieving families, convene multi-disciplinary team meetings to conduct case review and identify necessary policy and practice changes, and develop a communications plan to improve community awareness of the program, and provide pathways to voice concerns and complaints.

Last, the report recommended that DMH be made the administrator of the bridge funding, proposed by the Board in the October 2021 motion, to temporarily sustain the infrastructure built by DMH to provide continuity of services to grieving families while the program is in transition. As of the February 22, 2022 report<sup>8</sup>, the CEO is in the process of identifying and sourcing bridge funding for FAP so that any families applying for burial assistance are able to apply to receive benefits.

An annual budget of \$1,530,750 was proposed in the February 22, 2022 report<sup>9</sup> for a restructured FAP, which includes OVP and DMEC personnel, a CBO contract to engage trusted messengers, reimbursement of burial costs, and evaluation for the permanent program. The proposed implementation plan is predicated on funding being identified by March 2022 for contracted services to begin by July 2022. The success of FAP, a critical resource for families grieving after losing loved ones who died following a fatal use of force by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department or while in custody in the LA County jails, is dependent on timely allocation of permanent funding and continued commitment of FAP partners to coordinate and support the restructured program under OVP. There is an urgent need for the County to commit to FAP to provide a humane, compassionate response to impacted families and the larger

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<sup>8</sup> <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/162874.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Id.

community. After numerous Board Motions, it is the responsibility of the County to move forward the proposed plan for a permanent, restructured FAP for families and survivors of law enforcement harm.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

- 1) Direct the Chief Executive Office to identify and allocate ongoing funding in the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Final Changes Budget for the Family Assistance Program as outlined in the February 22, 2022 report from the Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention and the Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner as outlined in their proposed budget in the amount of \$1,530,740 annually.
- 2) Direct the Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention, in partnership with the Office of Inspector General, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner, Sheriff, Department of Mental Health, and other County and community partners to begin implementing the plan as outlined in the February 22, 2022 report, once funding has been allocated.
- 3) Direct the Department of Mental Health to continue to provide the Family Assistance Program, including providing healing support and counseling referrals to impacted families, administering funding to address burial costs, and coordinating with the Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention and partners to facilitate a smooth transition to the permanent program.

- 4) Direct the Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner and the Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention, in consultation with County Counsel and the Office of Inspector General, to develop a policy and protocols for next-of-kin notifications as part of the Family Assistance Program.
- 5) Direct the Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention, in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office, Office of Inspector General, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner and other County and community partners to provide written quarterly reports to the Board and provide quarterly updates to the public at the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission on implementation progress of the permanent Family Assistance Program.

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