



DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

hope. recovery. wellbeing.

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TO: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
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FROM: Lisa H. Wong, Psy.D.
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SUBJECT: **REPORT RESPONSE-ENABLING COUNTY LIBRARIES TO BETTER
SERVICE THEIR UNHOUSED PATRONS (ITEM 7, AGENDA OF
SEPTEMBER 24, 2024)**

On September 24, 2024, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion instructing the Department of Mental Health (DMH), in coordination with the Los Angeles (LA) County Librarian, the Director of the Department of Public Health (DPH) Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC), and the Chief Executive Office (CEO), to explore the feasibility of reinstating the pilot program that assigns clinicians and/or licensed social workers to support high-need libraries and report back to the Board in writing in 120-days. This report provides a summary of the departments' work to meet this resource need.

Feasibility

DMH, LA County Library, and DPH-SAPC leadership met on December 12, 2024, January 14, 2025, and January 15, 2025, to discuss the restoration of the former pilot program that embedded DMH clinicians in high-need LA County Libraries. DMH reviewed Library security incident reports and log entries used to categorize high-needs branch locations, identified trends in incident reporting and patron needs, and discussed desired outcomes/intervention expectations for co-located mental health professionals. Due to limited staffing, reinstating the library program will require DMH to divert staffing from the newly established Interim Housing Outreach Program (IHOP) to the ten library branches identified as having high needs for homeless services and supports. Given the high demand for services in interim housing settings, the diversion of staff will need to be done in a manner

that has the least amount of impact on program resources with a plan to scale support for the libraries in the future through a formal budget request.

Implementation Plan

DMH will allocate one homeless services team per Supervisorial District to serve the ten high-need library branches. These high need library branches were identified in the first report back and are as follows:

Supervisorial District	Select libraries with the greatest security incidents and unhoused counts	Daily Averages for Library Unhoused Visits September – December 2024
1	East Los Angeles Rosemead	34.8 15.9
2	Carson Lennox Willowbrook	18.15 28.3 18.2
3	San Fernando	4.1
4	Huntington Park Norwalk	30 16.1
5	Claremont Lancaster	27.45 23

The team will consist of one master’s level clinician (Social Worker, Marriage & Family Therapist or Professional Clinical Counselor) and one paraprofessional (Medical Case Worker or Community Health Worker). The teams will have dedicated office hours at high-need branch locations and will provide rotational coverage to other branches within the Supervisorial District as needed.

- **Number of staff:** Ten Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions
- **Classifications:** Five Mental Health Clinicians; Five Medical Case Workers (maybe substituted with qualified Community Health Workers)
- **Schedules/Office Hours:** Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Services

The Library Mental Health teams will provide information, referrals, and clinical support to library patrons experiencing life and behavioral challenges, as well as support with training for library staff. Duties will include:

- Conduct community outreach;
- Provision of clinical screenings, intervention, case management, linkage, and referrals to community resources and services;
- Identification of local resources and referrals;

- Travel to high-need library locations within Library regions and DMH Service Planning Areas (SPAs);
- Conduct drop-in “office hours” as needed;
- Serve as a liaison between Library, DMH, and outside agencies/nonprofits;
- Attend meetings, trainings, and events;
- Make training recommendations for library staff on topics relevant to supporting individuals experiencing homelessness;
- Facilitate community groups for library patrons experiencing homelessness;
- Support the development of library programs to assist patrons experiencing homelessness to connect to necessary services and supports (e.g. shelter, food, clothing, mental health treatment etc.); and
- Maintain records and prepare reports, as required to services provided and program impact.

Data/Performance Metrics

DMH staff deployed to high-need library branches will compliment other services/supports (community programs, security staff, countywide homeless outreach coordination etc.) to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase the number of verified connections to resources and services for library patrons experiencing homelessness;
- Decrease the number of library security incidents requiring involvement from law enforcement;
- Decrease the number of homeless encampments outside high-needs library branches;
- Increase sense of well-being for library staff; and
- Increase patron foot traffic and community access of in high-needs library branches.

While the inclusion of mental health staff in the libraries is a compassionate and proactive approach to addressing the needs of unhoused or individuals experiencing crises, there is still a need to ensure the safety of patrons, staff and community when providing immediate response in emergencies such as violence or threats that exceed the scope of intervention of these mental health professionals. This need helps balance safety with access to ensure libraries remain a safe place and complements to the supportive services offered.

Implementation Timeline

DMH is in the process of hiring for the IHOP program. DMH and Library leadership will meet weekly to establish office hours at the branch locations, identify office/group space, rotational schedules, leadership structure, workflows, program development needs, etc. starting January 27, 2025. Given that time will be needed for onboarding staff and initial orientation/training DMH will identify ten staff (two in each Supervisorial District) to support this effort by April 30, 2025. DMH teams can begin deployment and regular office hours in the high-need locations on June 2, 2025.

Funding Sources

Currently the library receives federal block grant funding from DPH-SAPC to fund the “*My Brother’s Keeper*” program. Provided that the proposed program maintains a focus on substance use (including harm reduction) any unspent funds from the DPH-SAPC block grant allocation may be applied to the program however this underspend is insufficient to fund the necessary FTEs.

The reallocation of IHOP staff to support the library prevents the use of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovations due to categorical limitations. To implement this fiscal year DMH has identified MHSA Community Services and Supports funding. The program will also be presented in future community planning processes for the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), which permits the use of funding for outreach to FSP eligible populations.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me, or staff can contact LaTina Jackson, Deputy Director, Countywide Engagement Division, at Ltjackson@dmh.lacounty.gov or (818) 610-6717.

LHW:CDD:LTJ:lm

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Los Angeles County Librarian
Department of Public Health