

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN
AND LINDSEY P. HORVATH**

**Updating Training for ACCESS Call Center Operators to Reflect Enhanced
Alternative Crisis Response Systems and Services**

The Los Angeles County (County) Departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Public Health (DPH) operate a 24/7 Help Line for Mental Health and Substance Use Services (Help Line) that people can call to get connected to mental health and substance use services across the County. This Help Line can be reached by dialing 1-800-854-7771, and the caller will be given a list of options. If the caller selects the option for “crisis or mental health services,” they will be connected to DMH’s ACCESS Center where they can request a variety of mental health services, including crisis response. Field Intervention Teams (FIT), consisting of unarmed trained mental health professionals, operate 24/7 and can respond in-person to mental health crises anywhere in the County. People can request these teams through the Help Line.

Over the last few years, the LA County Board of Supervisors (Board) and DMH have greatly expanded and enhanced their alternative crisis response system. This effort has included increasing the number of FIT available, expanding their hours of availability, implementing improved dispatch technology, and creating a comprehensive screening assessment for calls and FIT requests. These changes have been significant and have

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resulted in enhanced FIT response, which has, in turn, led to 37% more calls and requests for FIT when someone is facing a mental health crisis. However, in order for this system to work, the ACCESS call center operators need to be adequately trained with the updated systems, screenings, and dispatch processes. It is important that all operators receive renewed training about the updated system, services, and expectations.

Callers requesting a mental health response team are often specifically calling the DMH Help Line instead of 9-1-1 because they want an unarmed, compassionate, and therapeutic response to someone in crisis. Even if the screening determines that FIT is not the appropriate response, ACCESS operators should be able to connect the caller to alternative services instead of suggesting that they dial 9-1-1. For example, if the person in need is an unhoused individual who is not in active crisis, the operator could make a referral to DMH's Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement (HOME) teams. Or if the caller is calling from within the City of Los Angeles, the operator could connect them with some of the City's crisis response teams, like the CIRCLE or UMCR teams that respond to non-mental health specific crises. The ACCESS operators should be fully equipped to make these connections and warm handoffs in the event the caller does not meet the screening criteria for FIT.

Over the last few years, a lot of focus within the County has been on expanding FIT hours in order to provide timely and efficient alternative response options to individuals experiencing mental health crises. However, in order for these resources to be available to the public, DMH needs to ensure that the ACCESS call center operators are adequately trained on the updated system and procedures, educated about the

expectations when they receive a request for a FIT, and equipped with tools to connect callers to services other than FIT if needed.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Mental Health to do the following:

1. Establish and implement a comprehensive and updated training plan for all ACCESS call center operators that reflects the new alternative crisis response procedures, processes, screening, and resources. The training should include, but not be limited to, reference documents that depict the crisis response processes and expectations that can be easily accessed and referenced after the training is completed;
2. Establish processes to connect callers to alternative services if their requests for a Field Intervention Team (FIT) does not meet the associated screening criteria. These services should be alternatives to law enforcement, and include things like warm handoffs and referrals to DMH's Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement teams and various teams run by partner cities (i.e. City Los Angeles's Unarmed Mobile Crisis Response Team (UMCR) and Crisis and Incident Response through Community-Led Engagement (CIRCLE) programs); and
3. Report back in writing in 60 days with progress and updates on implementation of the above two directives.

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