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

**Investing in the Los Angeles County CareConnect Application**

Los Angeles County has a complicated network of beds and services available for its residents, ranging from immediate, low-barrier services to beds and services designed for high acuity needs that have burdensome referral and application processes. Community members and service providers often bear the burden of this complexity, finding it difficult to: identify appropriate services and beds; understand the availability, eligibility requirements, and application processes; and connect with someone who can help them access the needed resource. Many individuals in the community and even providers themselves have noted that, in addition to an existing shortage of beds, the ability to locate available beds and resources is a critical barrier to individuals getting the services they need.

Although there are existing resource and navigation tools, due to the complexities, there remains a gap in bridging these tools and resources. An individual seeking a range of services, or a staff person helping to navigate them, must know about and connect with several systems or resource directories throughout the County, depending on the needs they aim to address. This existing structure is not person- centered, focusing instead on funding streams, departments, and provider processes rather than the needs of an individual. Because of this, individuals are often unable to access resources they need, a gap that has wide-reaching consequences for LA

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County residents and communities.

In keeping with its “Care First” vision, the LA County Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) has contracted with a vendor to develop an integrated solution intended to connect individuals with services across the County and to bridge disparate systems and resources to provide comprehensive access to care. The LA County CareConnect application, which will initially launch in May/June 2024 on a limited scale, and grow thereafter, has the potential to allow providers and individuals to identify available services that meet their needs. Select service navigators, care coordinators, and service providers, depending on their program, may be able to use CareConnect to conduct activities such as:

- Search for clients and register them in the CareConnect application, as allowable per application confidentiality regulations.
- Conduct basic screenings for clients to identify immediate needs.
- Search for providers based on results of clients’ screenings, program characteristics, services, and service or bed availability.
- Send closed loop referrals to providers directly within CareConnect and coordinate using messaging through the CareConnect application, as authorized by service participants and as allowable per applicable confidentiality regulations.

When fully implemented, members of the public may be able to access CareConnect anonymously, without a login, to search for providers and can make one-off service requests through the platform, which will allow providers to respond via email or phone. Providers and

service navigators have two options for participating in CareConnect: they can be “connected” providers, who have logins to CareConnect and actively use CareConnect to send and receive referrals, or they can be “unconnected” providers, whose information is available in CareConnect through its searchable database but who do not receive referrals through it.

Although JCOD is leading the development, CareConnect’s functionality and flexibility has the potential to benefit more than just individuals who are impacted by the criminal justice system. The vendor (IBM) developing CareConnect has implemented similar technology in other jurisdictions, including Sonoma, Orange, and San Diego Counties in California, as well as Harris County, Texas and Monroe County, New York. In all these other jurisdictions, this technology has helped address the needs of a variety of vulnerable individuals, including people experiencing homelessness, those with significant behavioral health needs, those who are impacted by the justice system, and those with a combination of these complex needs. The intent of CareConnect is to focus on the whole person and the supports that they may be seeking, rather than sending individuals and navigators through LA County’s existing fractured web of systems and referral pathways to find comprehensive care and services.

In keeping with this intent, it is imperative that as many of LA County’s beds and service providers are accessible via CareConnect. CareConnect will not replace other systems developed by our departments for tracking their beds and services, such as the Department of Public Health’s Service and Bed Availability Tool (SBAT) or the Department of Mental Health’s provider directory. Rather, it will supplement these tools by aggregating information about

County-funded beds and services across systems, providing an additional means for our residents to gain access to needed services. However, to make optimal use of the tool, we need all respective County departments and agencies to collaborate and further explore and understand the extent of accessibility that CareConnect can provide.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Departments of Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH), and Public Health (DPH), the Homeless Initiative within the Chief Executive Office (CEO-HI), the Probation Department, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and any other relevant departments which operate or oversee beds and/or support services for vulnerable County residents, to work with the Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) and the CEO's Chief Information Office (CEO-CIO) to:
  - a. Include basic information about their funded beds and service providers in CareConnect. This includes information on services provided, eligibility, application and referral processes, and other core information needed to help navigate individuals to services. These County departments and agencies should collaborate with JCOD and CIO to identify the key information needed, resource and staffing needs, the best technical approach for incorporating this information, and any programmatic and strategic considerations for including this information.
  - b. Collaborate with JCOD and CIO to develop a process to identify which agencies

- and systems are candidates to serve as *connected* providers in CareConnect, identify the applicable agencies and systems, and develop a phased plan for establishing these service providers as connected providers, including any necessary work to develop forms or other processes within CareConnect to allow these providers to receive and manage closed-loop referrals.
2. Direct JCOD, in collaboration with CIO and the CEO-HI to explore opportunities with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) for potential integration of LAHSA services and beds into the CareConnect application.
  3. Direct JCOD, with specific input provided by DHS, DMH, DPH and CEO-HI, and in collaboration with CIO, to report back in writing within 90 days and quarterly thereafter, on the progress of meeting the above directives, including feasibility considerations specific to the unique programs/services. The progress should include the list of existing County beds and resources navigation systems, the list of County departments/agencies and their beds and service provider types which will be included within CareConnect at launch, and ongoing progress, including any integration with existing navigation systems.

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