

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

February 23, 2021

**Access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

The Alternative Crisis Response Steering Committee (ACR Steering Committee) was established in March 2020, by a Hahn/Barger motion that directed the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to analyze the current crisis response system in Los Angeles County (County). The goal of the ACR Steering Committee is to improve the County's "care first" alternatives to law enforcement response for individuals experiencing a health and human services crisis.

One of the subcommittees created by the ACR Steering Committee focuses on the regional call center network. There are various call centers across the County that can link a caller to different crisis responses depending on their need. For example, calling the DMH Help Line can link someone to a Psychiatric Mobile Response Team for dispatch, calling the National Suicide Prevention Hotline can connect someone to a Didi Hirsch professional trained in suicide counseling, and calling 9-1-1 can elicit a response from law enforcement or paramedics. During the ACR Crisis Call Center Subcommittee meetings, it was discovered that these call systems have been existing primarily in silos

**MOTION**

MITCHELL \_\_\_\_\_

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without the ability to interact with one another. This results in a fragmented crisis response system where calls for help are unable to be appropriately triaged to the right place.

In order to ensure that anyone in crisis receives the response they need, the County's regional call centers need to be able to route calls to the most appropriate destination. In January, DMH took a step to connect the silos by establishing a direct line from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) to the DMH Help Line so that 9-1-1 calls that do not require a law enforcement response can be re-routed directly to DMH. And at the same time, Didi Hirsch established a pilot program with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to re-route non-violent crisis calls from 9-1-1 to its Suicide Prevention Center.

The DMH Help line has the unique ability to provide callers access to County mental health resources and to dispatch unarmed psychiatric mobile responses when necessary. Allowing LASD to triage calls that require an unarmed mental health response directly to the DMH Help Line is an important step in ensuring that Los Angeles County residents receive a "care first" response. The Didi Hirsch partnership with LAPD similarly provides County residents with an immediate phone-based response during a crisis.

The next step is to establish a similar collaboration between the suicide prevention line run by Didi Hirsch and the DMH Help Line. Didi Hirsch counselors are specifically trained to provide emotional support over the phone, text, and chat to individuals in suicidal crisis. However, they do not have the ability to dispatch psychiatric mobile response units if necessary. The DMH Help Line, on the other hand, has the ability to dispatch mobile response teams but does not have the type of specialized staff or

technological capacity to provide the same type of emotional support for persons in suicidal crisis as Didi Hirsch. It would be mutually beneficial, therefore, for both Didi Hirsch and DMH to be able to re-route calls to one another when appropriate. The DMH Help Line should have a way to transfer calls to Didi Hirsch for suicide prevention counseling, and Didi Hirsch should have a way to conduct a live handoff to DMH for calls that require a psychiatric mobile response.

**I, THEREFORE MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to explore the feasibility of partnering with Didi Hirsch to allow for calls to be rerouted and transferred between the DMH Help Line and the Didi Hirsch National Suicide Prevention Hotline as needed, and report back in 30 days with a status update.

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JH: kc