



Recommendation for Action

File #: 20-1478, **Agenda Item #:** 26.

3/26/2020

Posting Language

Approve negotiation and execution of an agreement with OutYouth to provide mental health services to the LGBTQIA+ community for a 12-month term beginning April 1, 2020, with two 12-month extension options, each in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$300,000.

Lead Department

Austin Public Health.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$100,000 is included in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Austin Public Health Department Operating Budget.

Prior Council Action:

September 11, 2019 - Council approved Ordinance No. 20190911-001 adopting the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Operating Budget that included \$100,000 to expand access to affirming mental health therapy for the LGBTQIA+ community, on a 10-1 vote with Council Member Flannigan voting no.

For More Information:

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Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

On April 23, 2019, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Quality of Life Advisory Commission made the following Budget Recommendation to Council regarding the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget: "Support the stability and growth of organizations and businesses with: Existing services that provide LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health counseling in Austin; Programs [that] increase the number of LGBTQIA+ competent mental health care providers in Austin; [and] Projects that would expand access to LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health therapy."

Additional Backup Information:

Approval of this item will authorize Austin Public Health to negotiate and execute an agreement with Out Youth to provide mental health services and social support services to LGBTQIA+ individuals and families in Austin/Travis County. This agreement will be negotiated for an initial 12-month term with up to two 12-month extension options, each in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$300,000.

Out Youth will expand its School-based Clinical Services (SBS) Program to provide more life-saving mental health services to LGBTQIA+ students in Austin Title 1 middle schools and high schools. Since 2016, Out Youth's SBS Program has partnered with Communities In Schools (also known as CIS) of Central Texas to provide on-campus support and life-affirming therapy to LGBTQIA+ youth and allies in Austin Title 1 schools. Using an evidence-based curriculum, Out Youth provides weekly supportive group therapy in school settings to LGBTQIA+ youth and allies with various intersectional aspects of identity. Through referrals to their SBS

Program Out Youth also provides essential onsite individual counseling to students on an as-needed basis.

On January 6, 2020, Austin Public Health issued a Request for Grant Applications with a deadline of February 6, 2020 and received six responses. The objective of this competitive solicitation was to establish an agreement with a qualified nonprofit or government entity for the provision of mental health services within the LBGTQIA+ community, in accordance with the approved Fiscal Year 2019-2020 City Budget.

The LBGTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission provided the following rationale:

In 2015, the Austin/Travis County Community Advancement Network reported that 19% of Travis County adults (over 165,000 people) reported poor mental health (five or more days of the last 30 with depression, stress, anxiety or other issues). The Community Health Improvement Plan (Plan) recognizes the lack of mental health providers and resources in the community and has identified mental health as a key priority for Travis County. This Plan recognizes the need for providers who make patients from marginalized communities, including the LBGTQIA+ community, feel safe.

The average cost of a single psychotherapy session in Austin ranges from \$90-\$150 per session. A local LBGTQIA+ affirming counseling organization in Austin currently has a waitlist of almost 100 people due to the demand for these services. A local LBGTQIA+ youth organization serving ages 12-23 and another organization serving the transgender and gender non-conforming community each has a 30-person waiting list.

According to polling conducted by Gallup Williams Institute, the greater Austin area has the third largest LBGTQIA+ population per capita in the USA. QWELL Community Foundation's (QWELL) recent 'LBGTQ+ Wellbeing Survey of Greater Austin,' conducted in collaboration with Dr. Phillip Schnarrs, Associate Professor of Community-Based Participatory Research at Dell Medical School, collected data on more than 2,200 local adult LBGTQIA+ respondents. Of the 2200+ respondents, 400 were ages 18-25. In preliminary findings, nearly a third of these respondents felt anxious every day during the past week, and just under half reported feeling depressed for the majority of the days of the week. Twenty-six percent of the respondents reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the week preceding the survey.

Suicide is the second most common cause of death among 18 to 25-year-olds in the United States and research has consistently shown higher rates of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and suicide attempts among LBGTQIA+ youth compared to non-LBGTQIA+ peers. The LBGTQIA+ community's risk of suicide is six to eight times [that of] the general population, with transgender people, LBGTQIA+ seniors, and people of color at highest risk. QWELL's survey also found that only 17% of Austin respondents feel like valued members of the community. Studies show that lack of community connections is a direct cause of depression and other mental health issues.

Strategic Outcome(s):

Health and Environment.