




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager 

**DATE:** December 15, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Update on Mental Health Care for First Responders (Resolution No. 20190619-092)

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The purpose of this memo is to update you on Resolution No. [20190619-092](#), which highlights the growing concern regarding mental health issues and the significant impact they have on the overall wellness of public safety first responders.

The Resolution directed the City Manager to develop a report that thoroughly explains and identifies gaps and opportunities for improvement regarding:

1. The current options available to first responders to support and manage mental health needs.
2. Best practices and innovations that support and manage mental health needs.
3. If and how the efficacy of mental health evaluations has been determined.
4. How privacy measures are maintained, how mental health evaluations and procedures comply with federal law, and how employees are protected from retaliation for disclosing personal mental health conditions and needs.
5. The current state of health care insurance coverage for first responders within their respective departments.
6. The unique, on-the-job experiences that first responders deal with daily.

### Status Update

The City Manager's Office engaged the three public safety departments and the Human Resources Department to collect feedback on the current options available to personnel regarding mental health needs. Staff also coordinated through the public safety departments to obtain on-the-job experiences from personnel. In addition, staff is requesting information from

staff psychologists and external professionals for additional insight responsive to the Resolution. Staff has reached out to the public safety Associations to inform them about the process in gathering feedback and anticipates receiving additional feedback from them.

We have requested that this topic be placed on the following board's February 2021 agendas to gather their input: Public Safety Commission, the City of Austin Firefighters', Police Officers' and Emergency Medical Services Personnel Civil Service Commission, and the Austin-Travis County EMS Advisory Board. Staff will also reach out to the City Auditor's Office for their input.

An extension to May 2021 is requested to complete the activities described above in order to report back to Council with a comprehensive overview of the gaps and recommended improvements regarding mental health of first responders.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions.

cc:     Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
          CMO Executive Team  
          Joya Hayes, Human Resources Director  
          Chief Ernesto Rodriguez, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services Chief  
          Chief Brian Manley, Austin Police Chief  
          Chief Joel G. Baker, Austin Fire Chief