



Mental Health Services for First Responders

Public Safety Commission

February 1, 2021

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Background

- Council Resolution No. 20190619-092 – directed the City Manager to develop a report outlining the gaps and opportunities for improvement of mental health services for our first responders.
- Fall 2020 – Input from HRD, first responders, Departments, and Public Safety Associations
- January 2021 – Input session with first responders, staff psychologists, Associations and Department leadership
 - CAPCOG and Dell Medical School



Request



- Gathering additional input
 - February 1st – Public Safety Commission
 - February 3rd – Austin-Travis EMS Advisory Board
 - February 10th – Firefighters' and Police Officers' Civil Service Commission
 - City Auditor

- Your feedback - What gaps and/or improvements have we missed?

Current

AFD/EMS/APD

- Wellness Center
- Website
- Volunteer Chaplains
- APD First Responder Mental Health Grant
- Peer Support Program
- Critical Incident Stress Management debriefings

Austin Fire

- Two psychologists

Austin Police Department

- Two psychologists
- APD Wellness Bureau's internal website
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy

City's Medical Plan

- BlueCross BlueShield
- Employee Assistance Program
- iConnectYou

Gaps

- Need for a contracted psychiatrist to provide psychiatric treatment
- City's insurance limitations with connecting to mental health providers and substance abuse treatment
- Mental Health days for first responders
- Additional Peer Support program funding, support and activities
- Need for enhanced training for leadership within the departments in understanding the mental health needs of their employees

Improvements

- Establish a City-sponsored fund to retain a psychiatrist for first responders.
- Establish protocol for Mental Health days.
- Specialized training for public safety leadership on handling mental health issues for first responders.
- Develop and administer training on social-justice-informed mental health care.
- Hire 2 Full-Time employees to assist psychologists and Peer Support coordinators.
- Additional funding for Peer Support activities.
- Revisit departmental policies to accept the use of CBD oil for first responders.
- Implement annual behavioral health check-ins for first responders.
- Increased funding allocation for Dr. Tania Glenn & Associates, PA.
- Coordinate a joint statement from City leadership, Associations, and Department management that commits to limitations on sharing mental health treatment information and that seeking therapy will not have negative repercussions on a first responder's career.





Next Steps



- February 2021 – Gathering final input from boards and commissions
 - Due February 12th
- March 2021 – Final report due to Council

