



# City of Huntington Beach

**File #:** 21-333

**MEETING DATE:** 4/19/2021

## REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

**SUBMITTED TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**SUBMITTED BY:** Oliver Chi, City Manager

**PREPARED BY:** Julian Harvey, Interim Chief of Police

**Subject:**

**Approve selection of Be Well OC (Mind OC) as service provider for the City's Mobile Crisis Response Program for select mental health calls for service**

**Statement of Issue:**

Annually, the Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) responds to over 2,500 calls for service specifically involving mental health related needs. In addition, HBPD handles another 12,000 calls relating to homelessness, in which mental illness is either the primary cause or a significant contributing factor. Combined, these represent roughly 10% of all police calls for service.

While our officers are capable of navigating these interactions, the City recognizes that there are other organizations throughout Orange County that have specific training to better address these unique service needs, and that a partnership may result in better outcomes for all.

As such, the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking respondents interested in developing and implementing a Mobile Crisis Response program model as an alternative to our current mental health response model. Three (3) responses were received by the deadline of February 17, 2021, each of which were evaluated for their responsiveness to the RFQ and capabilities in implementing a successful program. Ultimately, Be Well OC was selected among the respondents as the most qualified and with the greatest likelihood of success.

**Financial Impact:**

Restricted funding has been identified to cover the first year, and the costs are not to exceed \$1.5 million for this pilot program. The following are the funding sources for this program: 1) Police Development Impact Fee Fund (Fund 227) \$368,000; 2) Restricted Restitution Fund (Fund 100) \$282,000; and 3) American Rescue Plan Act HOME Funding \$850,000.

**Recommended Action:**

A) Approve the selection of Be Well OC (Mind OC) as the service provider for the City's trial Mobile Crisis Response program, to shift the burden of response from the police department to Be Well OC for designated, triaged mental health calls for service not involving violence, weapons, or criminal behavior.

B) Authorize the City Manager, with approval as to form by the City Attorney, to execute an agreement with Be Well OC (Mind OC) in substantial form to the attached (Attachment 1).

C) Approve appropriation from the following funding sources: 1) Police Department Development Impact Fee Fund (Fund 227) \$368,000; 2) Restricted Restitution Fund (Fund 100) \$282,000; and 3) American Rescue Plan Act HOME Funding \$850,000.

**Alternative Action(s):**

Do not approve the recommended action and continue to handle the aforementioned calls for service pursuant to current practice and protocols within the Police Department.

**Analysis:**

The City of Huntington Beach, like cities across California and the United States, is faced with a growing number of residents and visitors who suffer from some form of mental illness. Annually, the Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) responds to over 2,500 calls for service specifically involving mental health related needs. With each call averaging 47 minutes, these incidents occupy the labor hours of two (2) full-time police officers each year. In addition, HBPD handles another 12,000 calls relating to homelessness, in which mental illness is either the primary cause or a significant contributing factor. Combined, these represent roughly 10% of all police calls for service.

While our officers perform effectively during these mental health related incidents, these types of interactions are often protracted events requiring long delays either in a residential or emergency room setting. This effectively removes the involved officers from the shift deployment during this period, making them unavailable for emergency response and preventing them from conducting crime prevention, proactive enforcement, and community policing functions.

The City also recognizes that many of these calls do not require police response, and further recognize there are other organizations throughout Orange County better trained, better suited, and better equipped to navigate the patchwork of mental health care options available to individuals in need.

Based on a comprehensive review and assessment of possible response options, the City has determined that an alternative approach to addressing certain mental health calls for service would result in better service delivery for those in need, while simultaneously improving public safety by freeing up officers to perform their primary function of policing the city. Equally impactful, an alternative model whereby trained clinicians conduct follow-up case management for our residents suffering from chronic mental illness will not only prevent recurrent calls for service, but will lead to the best outcomes for patients.

On January 26, 2021, the City of Huntington Beach issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking respondents interested in developing and implementing a Mobile Crisis Response model as an alternative to the current response model to select mental health related incidents and service requests. Three (3) responses were received by the deadline of February 17, 2021, each of which were evaluated for their responsiveness to the RFQ and capabilities in implementing a successful program.

At the March 15, 2021, City Council meeting, the City Manager and Chief of Police presented an

update not only on the concept, but on the process and timeline in selecting a vendor.

On March 29, 2021, two (2) of the RFQ respondents were invited to present to the selection committee comprised of the City Manager, Director of Community Services, and Chief of Police. Following that presentation, Be Well OC was selected among the respondents as the most qualified and with the greatest likelihood of success. Several factors combined to set Be Well OC apart, including the thoroughness of their proposal, their keen understanding and experience in the area of mental health services, and a proven record in Orange County of collaborating to establish exceptional mental health assessment and treatment facilities.

A review of similar programs across the country including the Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (*CAHOOTS*: Eugene, OR); Support Team Assistance Response (*STAR*: Denver, CO); Integrated Mobile Police Assessment Crisis Team (*IMPACT*: Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada); and the Mobile Crisis Support Team (Sacramento, CA) demonstrate that when implemented as part of a coordinated, holistic response to addressing the growing epidemic of mental illness, mobile response programs offer a more effective model by introducing mental health professionals with clinical experience at the point of primary field intervention. The diversion of select calls within the broad categories of mental health to non-police and non-government professionals allows for a higher level of police service delivery, as officers are freed from the burden of these calls and available for emergency response, proactive enforcement, and community policing activities.

Further analysis concerning police use of force further supports this model as an effective alternative. Often, police unintentionally heighten the level of anxiety and acuteness of the mental health crisis, resulting in an application of force. While the vast majority of these applications of force are justifiable and within policy, they are completely avoidable in those instances where there existed no requirement or need for police presence.

**Environmental Status:**

Not applicable.

**Strategic Plan Goal:**

Community Engagement  
Homelessness Response

**Attachment(s):**

1. Professional Services Contract between the City of Huntington Beach and Mind OC for a Pilot Mobile Crisis Response Program.