

Date: July 21, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager *T.M.M.*

From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services *KC*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Update on the Transition of the Homeless Education and Response Team (HEART) Funding to the Health and Human Services Department**

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As part of its adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY 21) Budget on September 8, 2020, the City Council directed the City Manager to delay the transfer of the HEART Teams from the Fire Department to the Health and Human Services Department (Health Department) for an estimated six months. This timeframe would allow staff time to assess and report back to the City Council on the details of the proposed new model and plan, including information on how the transition will be implemented without gaps in service, how the model compares to national best practices, and how any medical regulations and/or requirements are being addressed. This memorandum is in response to that request.

The Homeless Services Bureau (HSB), housed in the Health Department, is the lead agency for coordinated outreach through the Outreach Network Team and covers all 52-square miles of Long Beach. The current Outreach Network Team is comprised of four full-time HSB outreach staff; Police Department Quality of Life officers; Fire Department HEART unit; Public Works Department; Parks, Recreation and Marine Department; and, several community-based agencies.

### **REACH Outreach Teams**

Reallocation of the HEART Team funds from the Fire Department to the Health Department will provide the opportunity for two outreach teams to respond to mental and/or physical health situations. These teams will be named the REACH (Restorative Engagement to Achieve Collective Health). This is a new best practice model designed by the Health Department for integrated health and mental health outreach. Each REACH team will comprise of a public health nurse, a mental health clinician, and two outreach workers to appropriately address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. REACH teams will serve as alternative response models focused on mental and physical health with the goal of increasing access to services for people experiencing homelessness while working to reduce the number of calls for emergency response for mental and physical health-related situations.

### **Coordination with Emergency Services Departments**

Representatives assigned from the HSB, Fire and Police Departments, and Emergency Dispatch jointly discussed the best triage and response to calls that are coming into the 9-1-1 call center regarding homelessness. While the departments encourage the public to contact the non-emergency response line for outreach and concern requests, (562) 570-4MSC (4672), there is understanding that many people will continue to utilize 9-1-1 given their familiarity with

this number. Homeless outreach coordination staff will co-locate with Emergency Dispatch for several months to train on screening and triaging so that people who are having a safety or physical health emergency that needs Fire or Police Departments response are immediately connected with those services. Based on conversations with Emergency Dispatch and the alternative response workgroup, the REACH teams will primarily respond to unlawful lodging calls that relate to people experiencing homelessness.

REACH team members will receive training on assessing for safety and physical health emergencies. Protocols will be established for requesting additional response through dispatch, as well as for what precautions will be taken while waiting for response from the partner department in situations where it is identified that additional response is needed from either Fire or Police. Depending on the situation, these may include administering CPR or providing de-escalation techniques. Upon arrival of the partnering department, REACH teams will remain onsite to ensure a warm handoff and to provide follow-up information when appropriate. REACH teams will also be available to receive handoffs from Fire and Police in situations where a person who is experiencing homelessness has been evaluated and is not in need of additional crisis-related services, such as hospitalization. This is intended to connect the person to services so that they do not enter back into a situation where they are in need of emergency response due to being on the street.

### **Additional Outreach and Engagement**

When not responding to urgent calls for response, the REACH teams will provide proactive outreach as well as follow-up engagement to people experiencing homelessness. This may include interacting with people in treatment settings such as hospitals, mental health or substance use disorder programs, or interim housing settings to ensure that connection is maintained, and people are continually supported in their connection to the service system and recovery. For persons who regularly interact with emergency response services, the REACH teams will be a key partner in ending the person's cycle of homelessness and improving health outcomes through proactive follow-up, engagement, and close coordination between HSB and other care partners.

### **Hours of Operation**

The MSC contact line ((562) 570-4MSC) will be answered from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for same-day response. Any messages received after 4:00 p.m. will be reviewed the following morning. Calls and messages will be triaged and prioritized based upon urgency. Any call or message that does not have a direct concern regarding a person's physical or mental health will be scheduled within normal outreach protocols and will be addressed within 48 hours.

The REACH teams will operate daily (beginning with Monday-Friday and expanding through the weekend as additional staff are hired) from 7:00 am-5:00 pm. The two teams will alternate their schedule to ensure coverage throughout the City (as well as perform outreach on weekends in the future). For emergency calls and after 4:30 pm, individuals will be directed by the voicemail system to contact 9-1-1 for immediate medical response.

## Staffing

The information listed below outlines the staffing model for the Health Department's outreach team. All positions below will provide field-based outreach and engagement services and intensive case management functions within the City to people experiencing homelessness.

### Staff Duties:

1. *Public Health Nurse II (2 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) total - 1 funded through Measure H)*
  - Support the Street Outreach Network in addressing the healthcare needs of people experiencing homelessness.
  - Establish rapport with medical facilities and liaison with appropriate medical services.
  - Participate in a multi-disciplinary street outreach team to engage individuals in homeless encampments, shelters, and provide health assessments in non-traditional settings.
  - Assist in triaging, evaluating, and promoting the health of people experiencing homelessness, and provide the needed support in improving the quality of life of the homeless community.
  - Provide onsite care, situational health education, disease management, medication reconciliation, and preventive care activities.
  - Provide field-based case management, refer and link individuals to appropriate medical/specialty care.
  - Will receive direct supervision and support from the Nursing Division within DHHS.
2. *Mental Health Clinician and Licensed Mental Health Clinician (2 FTE: Public Health Professionals III)*
  - Conduct field-based outreach to people experiencing homelessness to connect them to appropriate resources.
  - Complete mental health assessments and coordinate appropriate clinical services, including behavioral health involuntary holds when needed.
  - Develop individualized case management plans to achieve permanent housing.
  - Provide case management and housing navigation services to clients with severe physical or mental health needs.
  - Provide limited housing retention services for those who are housed.
3. *Outreach Support Coordinator/Outreach Worker (1 FTE: Clerk Typist III)*
  - Operate the Outreach Hotline.
  - Prioritize urgent outreach needs as well as create the weekly outreach calendar to ensure response to all calls through the hotline.
  - Track call volume and response times.
  - Report on tracked metrics through outreach efforts.
  - Provide operational support to outreach teams.
  - Coordinate closely with 9-1-1 dispatch for triage.

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The Health Department is prepared to initiate the new REACH teams on August 2, 2021. The HEART Team has continued to operate and will continue through the end of August, leaving a one-month overlap of services so there is no gap in service. For questions or follow up, please contact me at (562) 570-4016 or Paul Duncan, Homeless Services Officer, at (562) 570-4581.

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