City of Austin Council Meeting Backup: January 30, 2025

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RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, there is strong scientific and policy consensus that mental health is a major factor in multiple areas of government responsibility and plays a particularly critical role in public safety; and

WHEREAS, reliance on law enforcement agencies as the primary response to mental health needs places significant burdens on individuals that are trained to handle criminal activity and may have minimal medical and mental health crisis intervention training and are not ideally positioned to access necessary resources for aftercare and case management that are key to effective treatment and prevention; and

WHEREAS, the use of the Austin Police Department (APD) as the default response for multiple social issues can complicate focus on its core mission of law enforcement and lead to serious unintended consequences for those in mental health crisis and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, like many other cities, the City has taken steps to rethink and reimagine how to best respond to mental health needs, including: (1) the Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC), which provides court diversion, connection to social services, and case management for low-level offenses that have a mental health component, (2) the Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (EMCOT), which sends qualified mental health workers with specialized crisis intervention training to respond jointly with law enforcement and provide follow-up services, and (3) 911 call center mental health workers who can provide immediate support over the phone to callers in crisis; and

WHEREAS, evidence and experience strongly supports the efficacy of such programs in providing more appropriate response to mental health needs and

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producing improved outcomes, along with a more efficient use of City resources; and

WHEREAS, Council has taken a number of recent steps to further expand and support such programs, including the introduction of a DACC mobile court program and additional funding for EMCOT with a goal of 24/7 coverage; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary and appropriate to exercise the authority vested in the City Charter, including the coordinated and integrated direction, supervision, and control of all City departments and agencies to protect the safety and wellbeing of all residents and to be responsible stewards of taxpayer money through the use of policy and resources to achieve the most effective outcomes in the most efficient way, while treating all people with respect, compassion, and dignity; **NOW**, **THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to prepare a report reviewing and analyzing information, data, policies, and historical context and trends relating to the City's response to and handling of mental health incidents and requests for service or assistance that would be useful to the development and improvement of City policies related to mental health response and determining what resources would be required. The report may include:

- Percentage of 911 or 311 calls where the caller requests assistance or provides information related to mental health;
- 2. Percentage of 911 or 311 calls where the caller does not request assistance or provide information related to mental health, but the call was later determined to be mental health related;

- Percentage of 911 calls diverted to a mental health call center employee and percentage of such diverted calls that were resolved without a police response;
- 4. Total number and percentage of police interactions, both in response to calls for service or officer initiated, involving mental health;
- 5. Total number and percentage of police hours devoted to mental health related activity;
- 6. Total number and percentage of City responses to incidents or service requests involving mental health where mental health workers, such as EMCOT, responded together with police, as well as the total number and percentage of City responses where mental health workers responded instead of police;
- 7. Total number and percentage of City responses to incidents or service requests involving mental health where mental health workers were requested to respond together with police, but no such workers were on duty or were otherwise unable to respond;
- 8. Data comparing the outcomes (e.g., arrest, emergency mental health detention, citation, referral to mental health or other services, etc.) of mental health calls with a police-only response to calls with a mental health worker (e.g., EMCOT) response or joint police and mental health worker response;
- 9. The current number of APD officers with mental health-specific training or certifications, the types of training and/or certifications received, percentage of shifts where one or more such officers are available, policies regarding how police officers with mental health

training are used and deployed, and policies regarding when and how to request joint response with mental health workers; and

10. Current police academy curriculum or other training required for all APD cadets and officers related to handling incidents and encounters related to mental health.

For items 1-8, above, a suggested time frame for the information provided would be at minimum from the last three years (2022, 2023, and 2024) and grouped on an annual basis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to include as part of the report: recommendations for potential policy changes to enable the City to respond efficiently and effectively to all mental health related incidents and requests for service; recommendations for potential policy changes to assist staff with medical and crisis response/intervention training specific to mental health; and estimates of the resources and funding required to implement the recommended policy changes and identifying potential sources of such funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to present the report to the Public Safety Committee by no later than the end of April 2025, in order for the Council and City staff to consider the recommendations in preparing the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget.

ADOPTED: , 2025 **ATTEST:** _____

Myrna Rios City Clerk