

January 7, 2025

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute a Memorandum of Agreement, and all necessary documents including any subsequent amendments, with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH), to establish the continuation of the DMH-Long Beach Police Department Mental Evaluation Team (MET) for co-response to school violence, mental health crises, and critical incidents, for five one-year periods with the initial term from September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025, at the discretion of the City Manager. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

City Council authorization is requested for the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (Agreement) with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) to continue the DMH-Long Beach Police Department Mental Evaluation Team (MET). This agreement strengthens the City's ability to address the complex and evolving needs of individuals in crisis. This co-response model addresses calls related to mental health crises, critical incidents, and targeted school violence within the City of Long Beach.

The MET program is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance public safety by integrating mental health professionals into law enforcement responses. By pairing licensed clinicians with police officers, the team improves outcomes during interactions with individuals experiencing mental health crises. This approach reduces the likelihood of escalation, provides immediate access to specialized services, and minimizes reliance on emergency rooms or incarceration, ultimately benefiting the Long Beach community.

Established in 1997 with one officer and one clinician, the program has grown over the years to six officers and six clinicians. In Fiscal Year 2024, the team conducted 1,151 crisis evaluations; these efforts reflect the program's ongoing impact and importance in addressing critical mental health needs within the community.

Under the agreement, DMH will:

- Provide licensed clinicians for the MET program for up to 40 hours per week.
- Supply necessary equipment, such as computers and communication tools, for clinician use.

- Provide clinicians with access to the County Integrated Behavioral Health Information System (IBHIS) to assist in service delivery. Clinicians are trained to strictly ensure compliance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5328, and other applicable laws.

The LBPD will:

- Ensure co-deployment of officers and clinicians to provide mental health crisis intervention.
- Supply operational support, including but not limited to vehicles, radios, office space, and furniture.

The MET program's co-response model includes crisis intervention, follow-up investigations, and connections to ongoing support through county resources. Additionally, the program enhances LBPD's training capabilities; the team are providers of crisis intervention behavioral health training to field training officers and serve as the lead LBPD Academy instructors for Learning Domain 37, People with Disabilities, in compliance with Senate Bill 29.

The MET program integrates the expertise of mental health professionals with law enforcement operations, adhering to national best practices for community policing and mental health interventions. It fosters trust, safety, and well-being while supporting the broader goals of public health and safety. Approval of this agreement ensures the continuation of a vital program that has served Long Beach for over 27 years and highlights the City's commitment to innovative and compassionate public safety practices.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Eliezer Ben-Shmuel and Budget Management Officer Nader Kaamoush on December 13, 2024.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action is requested on January 7, 2025, to ensure the Memorandum of Agreement is in place expeditiously.

FISCAL IMPACT

Participation in the Memorandum of Agreement allows for the continuation of a well-established coordinated public safety effort and enhances collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) for five one-year periods with the initial term from September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025. Sufficient appropriation is budgeted in the General Fund Group in the Police Department for the co-response model. Absent this partnership, the City would need to assume the financial burden of providing these services, likely requiring significant allocations from the General Fund. Furthermore, the Agreement leverages the specialized expertise of DMH-trained clinicians, which would be challenging and costly for the City to replicate independently.

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This agreement formalizes the relationship between the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the Long Beach Police Department, ensuring the continued provision of much-needed mental health services to the community. This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wally Hebeish', written over a horizontal line.

Wally Hebeish
Chief of Police
Police Department

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. B. Modica', written over a horizontal line.

THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER