



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Third District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

DRAFT

DATE: April 5, 2022

XX

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

AUTHORIZE COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING TO CARE INITIATIVE CONTRACTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On June 8, 2021 (3), San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a final American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding framework to support the residents of San Diego. The approved funding framework included the use of ARPA funding to address the behavioral health services needs of children, youth and families which were identified as high priority.

On December 7, 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis and outlined the pandemic's unprecedented impacts on the mental health of America's youth and families, as well as the mental health challenges that existed long before the pandemic. The advisory outlined a series of recommendations to improve youth mental health which includes providing resources and technical assistance to strengthen school-based mental health programs which include improving education about mental health, increasing screening of students for mental health concerns, investing in additional staff (e.g., school counselors) to support student mental health needs, improving care coordination, and financing school-based mental health services, building school-provider partnerships and coordinating resources to support prevention, screening, early intervention, and mental health treatment for youth in school-based settings.

To advance recommendations outlined in the advisory, and in alignment with other efforts to support youth, the Screening to Care Initiative was created address mental health treatment needs for middle school students working with school districts across the county. Today's action seeks approval to authorize a competitive solicitation for the procurement of *Screening to Care* services which will offer mental health services to middle school students in school districts through six (6) contracts operating across the six (6) County of San Diego regions.

Today's action supports the Board's priorities to provide inclusive services that yield better outcomes for vulnerable populations; and also supports the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision by ensuring access to services, promoting health and well-being in children and families, which promote a region which is building better health, living safely, and thriving.

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RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue competitive solicitations for the procurement of Screening to Care Initiative services in all six regions and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award contracts for an initial term of up to one year, with up to four option years, and up to an additional six months, if needed; and to amend the contracts to reflect changes in program, funding or service requirements, subject to the availability of funds and the approval of the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Over the past two years the pandemic has exacerbated the health disparities that exist among underserved and underrepresented communities and has been disproportionately impactful to society's most vulnerable population - children and youth. To address the social, economic, cultural, geographic, and other barriers that often hinder the accessibility of behavioral health care, Behavioral Health Services, in partnership with key stakeholders, has taken strides to address this gap.

The *Screening to Care* initiative will create connections to care that will help empower youth and their families to access high quality, culturally competent, affordable, youth mental health resources in school settings, which are a trusted and accessible community asset. Today's action will advance efforts of behavioral health equity by decreasing barriers to mental health care access to children and youth by deploying resources proportionate to community need.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2021-23 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, today's recommendations will result in approximate costs and revenue of up to \$7,500,000 in Fiscal Years 2022-23. The funding source will be American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

At their meeting on March 3, 2022, the Behavioral Health Advisory Board voted to **xxx** this recommendation.

BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the U.S. having a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. Additionally, from 2009 to 2019, the share of high school students who reported

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persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40%, to more than 1 in 3 students. Suicidal behaviors among high school students also increased during the decade preceding the pandemic, with 19% seriously considering attempting suicide, a 36% increase from 2009 to 2019, and about 16% having made a suicide plan in the prior year, a 44% increase from 2009 to 2019. Between 2007 and 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 in the U.S. increased by 57%, and early estimates show more than 6,600 suicide deaths among this age group in 2020.

The pandemic added to the pre-existing challenges that America's youth faced. It disrupted the lives of children and adolescents, such as in-person schooling, in-person social opportunities with peers and mentors, access to health care and social services, food, housing, and the health of their caregivers. The pandemic's negative impacts most heavily affected those who were vulnerable to begin with, such as youth with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, low-income youth, youth in rural areas, youth in immigrant households, youth involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and homeless youth.

On December 7, 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health (Advisory) to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. The Advisory called for a swift and coordinated response to this crisis as the nation continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and provided the following recommendations that individuals, families, community organizations, technology companies, governments, and others can take to improve the mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults. Recommended actions include:

- Recognizing that mental health is an essential part of overall health.
- Empowering youth and their families to recognize, manage, and learn from difficult emotions.
- Ensuring that every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care.
- Supporting the mental health of children and youth in educational, community, and childcare settings; and expand and support the early childhood and education workforce.
- Addressing the economic and social barriers that contribute to poor mental health for young people, families, and caregivers.
- Increasing timely data collection and research to identify and respond to youth mental health needs more rapidly, to include more research on the relationship between technology and youth mental health, and technology companies should be more transparent with data and algorithmic processes to enable this research.

To advance recommendations outlined in the advisory, and in alignment with other efforts to support youth, the Screening to Care Initiative was created address mental health treatment needs for middle school students working with school districts across the county. Today's action seeks approval to authorize a competitive solicitation for the procurement of *Screening to Care* services which will offer mental health services to middle school students in school districts through six (6) contracts operating in each of the County of San Diego regions.

If approved, these services will use a multi-tiered approach which includes universal screening of students facilitated by middle school staff, regardless of the child's insurance status. Based on the

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screening results, students will be stratified into three different tiers of intervention: school community and classroom-based intervention which is known as Tier 1; small group intervention which is known as Tier 2; and referral to treatment level services known as Tier 3 which will leverage the County operated SchoolLink programs. In addition to stratifying students into the right level of Tier services, the Screening to Care Initiative will provide Tier 2 supports to the students who present with moderate level of mental health support needs.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's action supports the Building Better Health and Living Safely Initiatives in the County of San Diego's (County) 2022-2027 Strategic Plan as well as the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision, by ensuring that children and youth with mental illness and substance use conditions continue to have access to a comprehensive continuum of behavioral health services administered through accessible behavioral health programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A