



Onondaga County Legislature

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Clerk

JAMES J. ROWLEY
Chairman

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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 14, 2023 **COLLEEN A. GUNNIP, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Chase, Ms. Kuhn, Dr. Kelly, Mr. Bush

ALSO ATTENDING: Mr. Ryan, Mrs. Ervin; also see attached

Chair Gunnip called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved. Chair Gunnip took the agenda items out of order.

2. CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Amy Cunningham, Commissioner

a. Authorizing an Intermunicipal Agreement with the City of Syracuse for Outreach Workers for Persons in Crisis

- Started as pilot program little over year ago with E911, Syracuse Police Department (SPD), Children and Family Services (CFS), Helio, St. Joes and Liberty
- Co-located contact person at E911 to answer 988 calls
 - Begin process of transferring 911 calls that meet 988 criteria to 988 line
 - No unnecessary police response
 - Mental health issue – get caller connected for triage and deploy mobile crisis team
 - Ongoing process with different phases and learning on 911 side
 - E911 has scripted protocols to respond to calls; had to be tweaked for those sent to 988
 - How can E911 educate their staff to be more comfortable passing along calls for mental health response
- Found that there are a lot of mental health calls and repeat calls that could use case management and referral to services
- This is what this IMA is doing with the city
 - City will provide funding for 2 Outreach Workers for law enforcement to refer individuals to
 - Essentially creating an adult version of the Children's Access Team
 - Right now have 1 Supervisor and 1 worker funded with OASIS funds
 - Working on building out a team, as well as policies and procedures
 - Helping with SPOA (Single Point Of Access) on adult side
 - Intention to add the 2 positions to that team for law enforcement referral portal
 - Current Outreach Worker getting referrals through SPOA or other sources
 - These 2 are specifically for the city
 - i.e. If the city is seeing same person downtown on the street or sidewalk, what can they do? Person is not breaking the law, but could use support and services; this will be a portal for referral and outreach
 - Outreach Workers will work with individual to identify long term programs or services and do a handoff
- Do not have data for outreach, but have some data on the E911 calls to 988
 - Goal to have 80-90% of person in crisis eligible calls transferred to 988 Crisis Councilor - currently at 30%
 - Part is education and working through barriers and protocols in having 911 being comfortable transferring calls
 - Mark Rusin at SPD very involved – has gone to E911, or sent an officer, to be on site and talk the dispatchers through what is appropriate to handoff and what is not
 - Been talking about how frequently SPD can have partnership, as SPD does not always have ability to send someone
 - Started at 8%, but now up to 30% of calls transferred
 - Stating to do more outbound calls
 - Part of training is 988 Crisis Counselor listening in on calls and coaching 911 dispatchers on what they can take and follow up with individuals
 - October there were 28 calls diverted from police to mobile crisis

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- City wants to continue, because it is saving them money from deploying police crew when it is not necessary; they are supportive of this
 - Yes, they are supportive and paying
- How much is the city paying?
 - \$180,000 for 2 positions; city sees the value
 - Law enforcement cannot do a lot for an individual in crisis; person not breaking law, not endangering others or themselves, just in crisis
 - Getting professional mobile crisis counseling people to help can save time and money
- Is there a reason there is not a mental health person helping the E911 people?
 - Yes, that is what contact is, the 988
 - It is the colocation piece; the Contact Crisis Counselor is onsite
 - County contracts with Contact (in place for a while)
- Is it 30% of all calls, or what is being identified?
 - It is what is identified as a person in crisis
 - Still sending police and ambulance out
- This still has to go through city council, correct?
 - It already did; approved by common council at last meeting
- Can fire departments access this when on a call?
 - Can look into it and add them to the portal
- Will this deal with people on the street (i.e. panhandlers downtown)?
 - For example, the city is getting calls from business owners because someone is on their street, the city can send referral to the Outreach Team, and someone will go out
 - Building Outreach Team, so it will not be just city and SPD; it can come through different channels
 - Currently, SPOA adult team is getting referrals from monthly crisis meeting with communitywide crisis response people and organizations
 - i.e. Someone is out and about, unhoused and in crisis, needs helps; will go out and find them
- Is In My Father's Kitchen involved in that community group?
 - Yes
- Will the 2 people be mental health professionals? What is their job description?
 - No, do not have the job description, but can get it
 - They will be referring people to sources – i.e. looking for those with lived experiences, credible messengers
 - Outreach team will work with mental health professionals within adult mental health system to provide appropriate referrals; more like a caseworker
- Are they housed at E911?
 - No; they will be housed here (Civic Center)
- When calls come to 911, if it is mental health, they would not dispatch fire or police, correct?
 - Yes, there will be an educational component to this for police, can expand to fire and first responders
- Will there be training for these two people?
 - Yes, there will be training through adult mental health team
- Does the county have a mobile team?
 - The county funds mobile teams through Liberty, Helio and St. Joe's
 - St. Joe's is getting to a point where they can send people out

- What does the county do for people in crisis in Elbridge and Clay?
 - It is countywide
 - These 2 people are specific to city
 - Broader team building is countywide
 - Mobile crisis is different than this program
 - i.e. If an individual is diverted to mobile crisis and they come 2 -3 times for the same individual, an Outreach Worker would then go to meet with this person to find longer term solutions
- Is the trigger multiple repeat calls?
 - Yes, will provide more assistance to get the help needed
- Is this a pilot project CFS put in place?
 - Yes; pilot project is the E911 calls
 - Based on that pilot project, a need was identified for a response to high system user calls
 - Now funding Outreach Team
- Does the city feel the county program does not adequately serve them, so they need to hire two people?
 - No, have not built the program; this is the start of building the program
 - County has a Supervisor and 1 Outreach Worker funded by OASIS funds
 - These 2 from city
 - Hoping to fund 2-3 more for countywide program
- Do not understand why it is not a countywide program, regardless if it is the city, town or village and funded accordingly
 - It will be, but 2 individuals will be specific to the city
 - Syracuse PD is paying for the 2 individuals
- Why does a municipality have to go out on their own for services in the county?
- Have been told that the city has been depending on Liberty to pick up people, and Liberty was dropping the ball
- City needed to reach someone that had good history; money is coming through SPD budget; city taxpayers paying, not grant money
- Is this 24/7?
 - Do not think so; calls at night will go into next day
 - The team does not respond immediately to calls; they are responding to repeated calls
- If it is slow for mental health calls, would these people be diverted to another program?
 - Believe they will have full caseloads; once they have a caseload, they will continue with those people
- How long is the pilot program?
 - E911 is pilot program, and this is the response to it; it is not a pilot at this point
 - \$180,000 is for this year, but will continue annually; will have to go back to Common Council
- Is there something that can be done to the resolution to make it less vague and clearer on the program?
 - Law :
 - The backup is a little light on details
 - There is an agreement, which can be provided; it went through Common Council
- Is a person in crisis someone that calls in about suicide?
 - It depends; 988 is the hotline
 - It is difficult to navigate; there are specific circumstances where mobile crisis would be more appropriate for suicide
 - Other people around or weapons are criteria that would prompt police
 - All suicide calls are based on E911 system and had immediate police response; have to go off script and make other parameters; right now, the E911 system has the dispatcher type in answer – currently rewriting script

- Are there best practices and objective criteria to help get people the services they need and mitigate liability on the county's side as well?
 - Yes, all through E911
 - Ben Rinaldi (E911 Deputy Commissioner) is very involved and training staff; also looking at revisions to system
 - Denver Star has robust human services response system – have calls with them to build this out more
 - What would a more robust human services response look like to (i.e.) homelessness
- Would like to have CFS come back in March with an update with more information; will have Clerk follow up
- Does Liberty have a more robust program (issues previously)?
 - Believe it is; they have 2 teams
 - Director of Mobile Services has been very involved and at the meetings
 - Have not heard otherwise; have been responsive at night with (i.e.) foster care
- Would like to include E911 in the meeting when CFS comes back in March

A motion was made by Dr. Kelly, seconded by Chair Gunnip, to approve this item

- What is the timeline for implementation?
 - Ready to go as soon as get okay for positions
- Are these civil service positions?
 - No, this is a contracted program
 - \$180,000 covers 2 positions with benefits, technology, etc.
- Can Law work on the resolution?
 - Law:
 - Resolution is only approving agreement between 2 people; maybe a summary sheet and IMA for terms
 - IMA is finalized
- Can there be some more information in the resolution on how the program will work?
 - Law:
 - Been in negotiation with the city and have tried getting it on committee the last 5-6 months
 - Can add another Whereas clause
 - Do not normally put terms and conditions that are in the IMA into the resolutions
- Maybe add how persons in crisis are identified
 - Law:
 - The more specific in the resolution, the more binding to the program
 - Tend to keep it broader
 - City resolutions are very bare bones on agendas; much less detail with the contract included

Ayes: 3 Abstentions: 2 (Chase, Kuhn); MOTION CARRIED.

- Committee will get more information from Law and Ms. Cunningham before session
- Will the positions be paid the same as County Outreach Workers?
 - Yes

1. SOCIAL SERVICES-ECONOMIC SECURITY:

a. Confirming the Reappointment of Sarah Merrick as the Onondaga County Commissioner of Social Services

A motion was made by Chair Gunnip, seconded by Ms. Kuhn, to approve this item, which includes the discussion. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

DATE: **NOVEMBER 14, 2023**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Amy Cunningham	DCFS
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Jim Beebe	Leg
John DeSantis	Leg
Tim Frateschi	Leg
Ben Yoes	Law
Dan Romeo	