



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR  
July 11, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Jennifer Louis, Chief of Police

Subject: Contract No. 32300022 Amendment: Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. for Additional Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), Education and Counseling Services

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute an amendment to Contract No. 32300022 with Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. to provide additional CISM Peer Support Team support, education and counselling services, for a total amount not to exceed \$150,000 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$200,000, and extending the term through June 30, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The amendment will add \$150,000 to this contract to cover the continuation of necessary support and services through FY2026. Funds for this contract will be allocated in General Fund, budget code 011-71-701-801-0000-000-421-612990.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Providing public safety employees with ongoing CISM, Peer Support Team development, education and counseling services is a Strategic Plan Priority Project, advancing our goal to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared City. The additional funding will allow the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to prioritize employee well-being and stress tolerance, which aligns with recommendation 5.2, Invest in Mental & Physical Health Services for Employees on the City Manager's Employer of Choice Roadmap.

In 2020, BPD contracted with the Psychological Services Group (PSG), for critical incident stress management, and peer support training following the suicide of a police officer and the unexpected death of a second officer. PSG was owned by Elizabeth Dansie, who had over 30 years' experience providing clinical support to California law enforcement agencies drawing on decades of experience responding to similar tragedies. BPD sought to provide immediate and ongoing support to our employees to navigate the loss of our staff and provide a safety net for others struggling with the

trauma experienced during a career in law enforcement. PSG was known as the gold standard for critical incident response and education through peer to peer defusing and facilitation of critical incident stress debriefings.

In 2021, with the guidance of PSG staff, BPD implemented a new peer support policy, created a new peer support team, and set out to train 24 peer support officers following the national curriculum developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and supported by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Nearly all team members have successfully completed the training and are actively engaged with our employees. Peer Support Team members are available 24/7, along with clinicians to provide immediate support and resources after a critical incident or employee injury. This program has seen great engagement and serves as a proactive effort to reduce the stigma that can be a barrier to employees seeking help when in crisis.

In 2022, PSG changed names and ownership and is now known as Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. (PSFCG). Due to the overwhelming success of the program, BPD contracted with PSFCG through June 30, 2022 and waived competitive solicitation based on the need to provide continuity of care, ongoing CISM services, education, and training to our employees. Through this contract BPD has benefited from the collaboration with more than a dozen other Bay Area law enforcement agencies through PSFCG quarterly regional training. It is imperative that we continue to provide these valuable resources to our employees.

### BACKGROUND

It is well known that those in law enforcement occupations experience a variety of adverse exposures to life threatening situations, traumatic events, witnessing violence and assaults, and other compounding adverse incidents. These exposures can increase the potential for suicidal ideation such as depression and hopelessness. A 2018 study showed that police officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. The study cites the discrepancy between suicide rates among the general population and first responders are rooted in unaddressed shame and stigma associated with suicide and a lack of research and resources for first responders dealing with mental health challenges as well as growing pressure and stress from the pandemic. According to CDC data, suicide rates for the general population declined by 3 percent, from 2019 to 2020, whereas rates among first responders showed moderate to no decrease from 2017 to 2020. In 2020, 116 police officers died by suicide and 113 died in the line of duty. Researchers suggest that the 2020 numbers are likely an undercount due to stigma and shame, which may have caused a lack of reporting. In 2021, 46 officers were fatally shot, where more than triple that (140) committed suicide.

In June 2021, BPD participated in a National Wellness Survey for public safety personnel. The survey was conducted by the U.S. Marshals Service, Fairfax County PD, and Nova Southeastern University. The survey was designed to assess the impact of public safety work on individual well-being. Of the 199 employees (sworn officers and

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public safety dispatchers) invited to complete the survey, 48 (24%) participated. The survey found in part that 52% of respondents indicated some degree of depression, 73% were feeling discouraged about the future, 10% received scores representing clinical significance on the PTSD checklist, 60% reported being bothered by a stressful event or experience within the past month, and 44% reported trouble with sleep.

Our police officers and professional employees, are not immune to the stressors of police work. It is imperative that we continue to discuss police suicide and provide positive solutions to managing workplace stressors by actively promoting mental an emotional health. Of the 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country, approximately five percent have suicide prevention training programs such as what currently exists at BPD.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

This contract does not create environmental sustainability or climate change impacts.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Peer support serves as a powerful resource for police employees in addressing stress management, mental health concerns, suicide prevention, and overall officer safety and wellness. It is the City of Berkeley's obligation to continue to mitigate these impacts through education and post incident support. The BPD Peer Support Team has been engaged and continues to progress in their effort to reduce lost work time, workers compensation claims and improving the mental health and resilience of BPD employees with the assistance of PSFCG services.

#### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Either not fund the contract or require competitive bid, which would cause tremendous delay and leave the BPD Peer Support Team unsupported in a critical incident and interrupt mental health support services already in place by a trusted vendor for BPD employees.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Jennifer Tate, Lieutenant, Police Department, (510) 981-5983

Attachments

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

CONTRACT NO. 32300022 AMENDMENT: PUBLIC SAFETY FAMILY COUNSELING GROUP INC. FOR ADDITIONAL CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND COUNSELING SERVICES

WHEREAS, Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. (PSFCG) has provided reliable Critical Incident Stress Management, education and counseling services and assisted BPD with the selection and training of a robust Peer Support Team; and

WHEREAS, It is well known that those in law enforcement occupations experience a variety of adverse exposures to life threatening situations, traumatic events, witnessing violence and assaults, and other compounding adverse incidents. These exposures can increase the potential for suicidal ideation such as depression and hopelessness. A 2018 study showed that police officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS PSFCG has provided critically needed crisis intervention stress management and crisis response services for the multiple traumatic events that Berkeley Police Employees have endured over the past several years. These events have included the suicide of an employee as well as life-saving efforts provided to several individuals who tragically succumbed to their injuries. These services are urgently needed to ensure the men and women of the Berkeley Police Department have continued resources and support necessary to process these events resiliently; and

WHEREAS, with the guidance of PSFCG staff, BPD implemented a new peer support policy, created a new peer support team, and set out to train 24 peer support officers following the national curriculum developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and supported by the International Association of Chiefs of Police; and

WHEREAS, the PSFCG has been incredibly impactful, normalizing the practice of organized discussion of post traumatic events with proactive intervention with the assistance of professional clinicians who have been instrumental in crisis treatment for numerous Bay Area law enforcement agencies. This group of clinicians is able to respond to the unpredictable and the often off hours nature of the BPD Peer Support Team requests for assistance.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is authorized to execute an amendment to Contract No. 32300022 with Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$150,000 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$200,000 to extend the term of the contract through June 30, 2026. Funding is budgeted in 011-71-701-801-0000-000-421-612990.