STAFF REPORT
9/21/2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gustavo J. Romo, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Jessica Torres, PIO Department Assistant

Anita Ward, Care Solace Consultant

SUBJECT: Discussion of Proposed Social and Mental Health Care Coordination Services with Care Solace, Inc. Utilizing Opioid Settlement Funds

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Mental health affects everyone - nearly half of the population will experience a mental health concern during the course of their lifetime. According to the report, Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health developed by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration):

- 18.8 percent of adults aged 18 or older (or 46.5 million people) received any of the following mental health services in the past year: inpatient or outpatient mental health services, prescription medication for a mental health issue, or virtual (i.e., telehealth) services.
- About four percent of Americans - across all income, geographic, and ethnic backgrounds - live with a chronic, severe, and disabling mental illness.
- Approximately 21 percent of adolescents have had a mental health disorder by the age of 18.

Care Solace proposes to assist the City of Coachella by providing its residents with a streamlined, confidential, and free pathway to mental health and substance use care. The service acts as a care coordination platform that connects people to vetted, local providers.

How Care Solace Can Help

- Connecting Residents to Providers: Care Solace has a large database of mental health care and substance use treatment providers. It can match Coachella residents with professionals based on their specific needs, insurance, and other preferences.

- Personalized Assistance: Care Solace offers a 24/7/365 "Care Companion" team that can guide residents through finding and scheduling appointments. They can even make calls on the resident's behalf, helping them navigate insurance and reduce wait times.
- Addressing Barriers to Care: The service is designed to remove common obstacles to seeking mental health support, such as the difficulty of finding a provider who is accepting new patients or the confusion of navigating different insurance plans. Care Solace can assist residents whether they have private insurance, Medicaid, or no insurance at all.
- Support for the Whole Community: Care Solace works with municipalities to provide community-wide solutions for all residents. The platform can also help with connecting people to social services like housing and food assistance.
- Confidentiality: The service is confidential, and any information shared is securely stored. Users can even access an anonymous self-service tool to search for providers on their own.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council direct staff to prepare a Professional Services Agreement with Care Solace, Inc. to provide social and mental health care coordination services utilizing funds received through the National Opioid Settlement Agreements and place the Agreement on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Council meeting for consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Annual pricing for the City of Coachella is based on a fee of $1.00 per resident/per year. There is sufficient funding in the Opioid Settlement Agreements revenue accounts to award a Professional Services Agreement to Care Solace, Inc. without impacting the City's General Fund or any other non-restricted funds.

BACKGROUND:

California has joined multiple national lawsuits against manufacturers, distributors, and other entities responsible for aiding the opioid epidemic. As a result, the City of Coachella has received funds from national Opioid Settlement Agreements (OSA) and anticipates receiving funds for the next five to twelve years, depending on the settlement. Each state's share of the funding has been determined by agreement among the states using a formula that considers the impact of the opioid crisis on the state - the number of overdose deaths, the number of residents with Substance Use Disorder (SUD), and the number of opioids prescribed - along with the population of the state. California jurisdictions receiving OSA allocations must utilize funds for substance use prevention, intervention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services in communities.

The City is considering entering into an agreement with Care Solace, Inc. ("Contractor") for a three-year term to utilize a portion of funding received by the City of Coachella under the

California Opioid Settlements to provide services to the community. Through this additional strategy to expand the use of OSA funds, the Contractor would serve as a central hub for social and mental health care coordination services for Coachella residents.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Care Solace provides timely connections to verified mental health providers and local social services, expands on existing programs, and bridges the gaps for needs that exceed the scope of those services. Serving as a coordinated point of entry to mental health and social services, Care Solace supports the entire Coachella ecosystem from first responders to crisis centers, to social workers, to courts and jails, and to all residents. Through a tech-enabled human approach, Care Solace will ensure that individuals receive equitable access to reliable, ethical, and high-quality mental health care, regardless of coverage, including private insurance, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Medicaid, and sliding scale options for those without insurance. Care Solace's care coordination will help bridge the gap to behavioral health services for individuals in even the most vulnerable communities.

Care Solace's three main proprietary services - Care Loop, Care Match, and Care Companions - will amplify the City's current initiatives and services while filling gaps and offering insights through its proposed Scope of Services (Attachment A).

The Contractor's Provider Database offers City residents and agencies access to more than 473,000 verified mental health providers, 110,000 of which are in California, including those offering advanced pathways to care. Providers are geocoded, so an individual can select a local provider for in-person sessions if that is the preference. Selection filters also include language, ethnicity, age, specialization, and more. All services are confidential and accessible 24/7/365, can be accessed via phone or internet, and do not require any special equipment or access speed.

This proposed project aligns with DHCS requirements for using opioid abatement funding:

1. Approved Uses:
CONNECT PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP TO THE HELP THEY NEED (CONNECTIONS TO CARE)

Provide connections to care for people who have - or are at risk of developing - Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and any co-occurring Substance Use Disorder / Mental Health conditions (SUD/MH) through evidence-based or evidence-informed programs or strategies that may include, but are not limited to, those that:

i. Support centralized call centers that provide information and connections to appropriate services and supports for persons with OUD and any co-occurring SUD/MH conditions.

ii. Purchase automated versions of Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) services and support ongoing costs of the technology.

iii. Expand warm hand-off services to transition to recovery services. Care Solace delivers monthly impact reports including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) through a variety of data points, as well as live Impact Reporting via an administrative dashboard, allowing the City team secure access to real-time data on community mental health and KPIs. Additional data

can be requested, such as client satisfaction and feedback on Care Solace customer services from users who utilize the Care Companion services.

CONCLUSION:

Care Solace's efforts underscore the City's Strategic Plan by leveraging data analytics to provide transparency and guide evidence-informed decision-making. Care Solace's goal is to provide a single interface to mental health services and thereby ensure that communities can easily and equitably access mental health care and wraparound social services, without being limited by resources or fragmentation. It is the only service that aggregates hundreds of thousands of clinical therapy and telehealth resources as well as insurance information into one database to streamline care coordination and reduce time and attrition in accessing mental health care. As the only U.S.-based mental health care coordination service with proprietary software, a database of more than 673,000 health care providers, and warm-handoff processes, the Contractor uniquely qualifies as a Single Available Source for procurement.

Implementation of the Care Solace Central Hub of Care will provide another powerful tool in Coachella's toolkit to connect residents with licensed behavioral health care providers and social services, and will further efforts to impact mental health and community well-being through a dedicated funding source.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment A: Care Solace Proposed Scope of Services