

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: ERICK W. ZINSER
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY/CHIEF OF POLICE
SUBJECT: CO-RESPONDER
DATE: APRIL 3, 2024

The City of Novi has seen a sharp increase in mental health related calls in the last ten years. In 2013, the Novi Police Department responded to 55 mental health related calls for service. That number soared to 199 in 2022. Our mental health related calls stayed consistent in 2023 with 189 calls for service. That is an overall increase of 243.66%.

In 2021, the Oakland County Mental Health Network (OCHN) established a co-responder program to help police agencies enhance their response to mental health related calls. The program was launched with three police agencies: Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Township, and Birmingham. The program has expanded to include 11 police agencies across Oakland County. The OCHN has secured funding through Oakland County Emergency Management and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to fund five additional co-responders in Oakland County. We have been working with OCHN in exploring an opportunity to bring a co-responder to Novi.

The OCHN has reviewed our data concerning mental health related calls and is recommending the Novi Police Department host their own co-responder. Although working out of the Novi Police Department, the co-responder would be an employee of OCHN. The OCHN will use ARPA funds to pay for the position in the first year which will go into effect upon executing a contract with OCHN. The City of Novi would have to commit to funding the position thereafter. The cost of the position including salary, benefits, vehicle stipend, and cell phone is \$115,090.56. The co-responder would remain an employee of OCHN, and the city would reimburse OCHN.

Grant Opportunity

The City of Novi has an opportunity to secure a grant through the Department of Justice to help offset the cost of the co-responder program. The grant, Promoting Access to Crisis Teams – Community Policing is a two-year grant for \$230,181.12. The City of Novi would be required to contribute 25% (\$57,454.28) of the grant and commit to fully funding the program after the grant expires. There is no penalty for not continuing the program after the grant expires. However, not committing to 25% or continuing the program could adversely affect being awarded the grant.

OPIOID Settlement Funds

In 2023, the City of Novi began receiving funds from the National Opioid Settlement in the amount of \$63,270. It is projected the City of Novi will continue to receive Opioid Settlement funds of \$10,000, annually for the next 15 years. A local municipality receiving opioid settlement funds can determine how to allocate their disbursements. A co-responder program falls well within the parameters of authorized spending.

		OCHN	City of Novi	Total
Year One	\$ 115,091	\$ 115,091	\$ -	\$ 115,091
				\$ -
2025-26	\$ 115,091	\$ 86,318	\$ 28,773	\$ 115,091
2026-27	\$ 115,091	\$ 86,318	\$ 28,773	\$ 115,091
Grant				
Submission	\$ 230,181	\$ 172,636	\$ 57,545	\$ 230,181
		75%	25%	

Looking Ahead

After year three the City of Novi would be responsible to fully fund the co-responder program at an estimated costs of \$115,090.56. We will continue to seek out grants to help offset the cost.

Recommendation

It is unlikely a contract with OCHN will be in place by the end of the current budget cycle. Given that OCHN will cover the cost for the first year, I anticipate the city would start to encumber the cost during the 2025-26 budget cycle and every year thereafter. While our opioid settlement funds will not cover the cost of a co-responder, I recommend the city use those funds to help offset the cost of the program as we move forward. Investing in a co-responder program provides a much-needed benefit to our community and public safety team. A co-responder will enhance our public safety services and bring professional assistance to our citizens and our public safety team.

- 1) I recommend the City of Novi moves forward with a co-responder program and partner with OCHN.
- 2) I recommend we move forward with requesting a grant to help support the cost of a co-responder program.
- 3) I recommend we use the Opioid Settlement fund to help offset the cost of a co-responder program.