

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: June 11, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS THE EXPLORATION AND FEASIBILITY OF A CRISIS INTERVENTION RESPONSE PROGRAM THAT WOULD DEPLOY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FIRST RESPONDERS TO ADDRESS CERTAIN MENTAL HEALTH CRISES.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends exploring a one-year Co-Responder Crisis Response Team pilot initiative as delineated below.

The Administration recommends that while the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee evaluates a crisis intervention response program, it also carefully considers several critical factors that will significantly impact the General Fund budget, beginning in FY 2026:

1. The City's increasing unfunded capital improvement program
2. Long-term General Fund financial projections indicating a potential shortfall in upcoming fiscal years
3. The passage of Amendment 5 in November 2024, which increases the homestead exemption and further constrains the growth of taxable property values

These considerations are essential to ensure that decisions regarding the crisis intervention response program align with the City's broader long-term financial stability and strategic priorities. If the Committee recommends funding the initiative, the Administration recommends it be considered as part of the FY 2026 budget process.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the April 23, 2025 City Commission Meeting, at the request of Commissioner Laura Dominguez and co-sponsored by Commissioner Alex Fernandez, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (C4 N) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC") to discuss the exploration and feasibility of a crisis intervention response program that would deploy behavioral health first responders to address certain mental health crises.

ANALYSIS

A Co-Responder Crisis Intervention Program, further referred to as a Co-Responder Crisis Response Team (CRCRT), promotes effective strategies by law enforcement and licensed mental health clinicians to identify and reduce the risk of harm to individuals with mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse. The CRCRT reduces the rate at which individuals in crisis rely on emergency services and law enforcement for mental health and substance abuse related issues. The CRCRT would develop a crisis continuum of care that could result in the reduction of harm, arrests, and use of jails.

The proposed CRCRT will partner law enforcement officers with licensed mental health clinicians when responding to calls for service involving a person experiencing behavioral health crisis. The

program would allow the licensed clinician to assess the individual and provide immediate services as an alternative to an arrest once the law enforcement officer has made it safe to assess. The following are the benefits of having a licensed clinician readily available for officers through a CRCRT:

- Ability to provide clinical support on scene while conducting immediate screenings and assessments
- Ability to promote and refer access to quality mental and substance abuse treatment and services
- Development of a continuum of care (follow up with individuals occurs within 24-48 hours)
- Provision of proper care, treatment, and follow up thus reducing the likelihood of further crisis incidents, and ultimately lowering the number of calls for service by repeat clients
- Reduction of arrests, thus reducing the use of jails and emergency services

WestCare/The Village South, Inc., has offered to partner with the Miami Beach Police Department (MBPD) and assist in both the creation of a CRCRT as well as in the development of protocols for collecting, tracking, and exporting data reports while guaranteeing HIPPA privacy. The organization currently partners with the City of Miami Police Department and provides licensed mental health clinicians through a program built on community partnership between law enforcement response and behavioral health care.

An ideal CRCRT model is composed of a licensed clinician, a trained peer support specialist, being dispatched alongside an officer unit in response to calls identified by dispatch as potentially involving mental health crises or behavioral health concerns. The clinician works directly with law enforcement to assess the situation, provide immediate stabilization, and determine the appropriate level of care needed. This collaborative approach ensures that individuals in crisis receive a comprehensive evaluation, with an emphasis on de-escalation and ensuring the safety and well-being of all parties involved.

The peer support specialist offers additional critical on-scene support by providing individuals in crisis with empathetic, lived experience-based assistance. This support is crucial for building trust, promoting engagement, and reducing stigma. Following the crisis intervention, the peer support specialist helps ensure continuity of care by assisting with post-crisis recovery, including facilitating linkages to community services, offering ongoing peer support, and helping individuals navigate the mental health system. This integrated model aims to improve both immediate outcomes and long-term mental health recovery by addressing both immediate needs and offering sustained support.

For reference, MBPD officers responded to or initiated 907 Baker Act cases in 2024. As of April, officers have handled 274 cases in 2025. On average, two to three officers respond to calls for service involving an individual experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Based on this data, a CRCRT could positively impact the Department by being readily available and proactively responding to known locations and/or engaging with repeat high utilizers. This would in turn enhance law enforcement visibility in other areas.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

One trained behavioral health team consisting of one (1) Licensed Clinician and one (1) Peer Specialist to provide the follow-up referral and linkage as well as outreach for an eight-hour daily shift between Monday and Friday has an approximate annual cost of **\$250,000**. This funding will allow the Department to assess the efficacy of the program.

If the pilot is approved, the Department would reallocate existing police resources to facilitate a temporary implementation. A permanent implementation would necessitate dedicated police officers and would incur an additional financial impact to be determined at a later date.

CONCLUSION

The Administration supports implementing a CRCRT pilot program within the City of Miami Beach for a one-year period. If the CRCRT pilot program proves to be beneficial and receives the favorable recommendation for continuation beyond one-year, the Department will, based on prior operational experience, evaluate various shifts and scheduling modification with the objective of enhancing services related to responding to mental health crises or behavioral health concerns. Based on the proactive measures taken by the partnership between law enforcement and licensed mental health clinicians, not only would the Police Department positively benefit from the initiative, the overall welfare of the community would also improve.

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s): .

Department

Police

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner Laura Dominguez

Condensed Title

Crisis Intervention Response Program.