



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: July 16, 2024

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RECEIVE UPDATE ON THE EXPLORATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING PROBATION STAFF WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On February 27, 2024 (16), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to work with the County of San Diego Probation Department (Probation) to look for opportunities and resources to enhance staff wellness and mental health and identify recommendations for enhancing the wellness program that would benefit the department and its staff. Today's item provides an update on the work done to date.

Research shows that probation officer stress stems from two primary sources: 1) the demands of responding to critical incidents, and 2) more mundane organizational stressors, ranging from understaffed shifts to mandatory overtime. Studies show reducing probation officer stress and increasing wellness can reduce the number of critical incidents and facilitate positive engagement with all clients. Supporting probation officers' physical, mental, and emotional health is fundamental to creating safer communities, building meaningful relationships, and providing better services to the residents of San Diego County.

The Probation Department aims to foster a culture of wellness within the organization. Benefits of a comprehensive wellness program include better job performance, improved recruitment and retention, and enhanced relationships both internally and externally. Having access to wellness resources can lead to fewer complaints, a reduction in the use of sick days, and less uses of force incidents.

Today's action includes receiving a presentation regarding Probation's wellness program and accepting staff recommendations for enhancing the department's existing wellness program. Recommendations include expanding the department's current wellness program by reallocating resources to provide one dedicated staff for the Wellness Unit, increasing staff wellness training opportunities, and procuring a wellness app. Probation also requests to waive Board Policy B-29,

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Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery to remove the requirements of prior approval of grant applications and full cost recovery, so that Probation may apply for multiple grants without requiring the Board to consider each grant application. Probation shall return to the Board for acceptance of grant funds.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive County staff recommendations for enhancing the existing wellness program that would benefit Probation Department staff, including reallocating staff to the Wellness Unit, increasing wellness training opportunities, and procuring a wellness app.
2. Authorize the Chief Probation Officer, through June 30, 2034, to apply for grant funds related to staff wellness and mental health and to execute all required grant documents and related contracts, including any annual extensions, amendments and/or revisions that do not materially impact or alter services or funding in subsequent years. Probation shall return to the Board for acceptance of grant funds.
3. Waive Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts - Department Responsibility for Full Cost Recovery, which requires prior approval of grant applications and full cost recovery for grants.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Public safety is of importance for all communities and all county residents. Strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve are imperative to maintaining public safety. A comprehensive wellness program benefits the community by promoting better officer job performance, improving recruitment and retention, and enhancing relationships both internally and externally. It is important to envision better outcomes for underserved and diverse communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system. Enhancing Probation’s wellness program assists with the department’s goal to advance fairness and equity.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's action to accept recommendations to further invest in funding and resources to enhance staff wellness contributes to the County of San Diego’s sustainability goals of protecting the health and wellbeing of Probation’s workforce by providing support services to ensure continuity of operations and advancing health equity by investing in resources that will benefit staff as they address a myriad of challenges. Investing in staff wellness improves the work lives of those who serve our justice involved communities, which impacts the quality of service received by the public.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact for today’s recommendation to receive an update on opportunities for enhancing Probation staff wellness and mental health. If there are any fiscal impacts resulting from

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future recommendations, staff will return to the Board with identified funding sources for consideration.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing highlighted officer safety and wellness as one of the six pillars for policing. In its final report, the task force recommended the promotion of officer wellness at all levels of law enforcement. More recently, the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, passed into U.S. law in 2018, supported the expansion of wellness services across federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. Numerous publications from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Department of Justice, public safety entities, and the behavioral health community also indicate there is a growing need to invest and provide wellness resources to those working in professions of public safety and community corrections.

Working in law enforcement is known to be an emotionally, mentally, and physically exhausting occupation. Officers in facilities are frequently exposed to traumatizing events, engage daily with clients who have experienced generational trauma, and investigate and write reports on traumatic events. This trauma can be compounded by additional stressors such as mandatory overtime, internal investigations of policy violations, and competing administrative tasks. Exposure to such layers of trauma and stress can lead to secondary trauma, posttraumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout for staff. As we bring forward programs that are designed to advance fairness and equity, require more quality engagement with clients, and create better outcomes for diverse communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system, we must also properly invest in the capacity of our sworn and non-sworn staff to do their jobs.

On January 25, 2022 (17), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to present updates and recommendations regarding planning and funding strategies for the successful recruitment of public safety officers. On June 28, 2022 (20), the Board received the update related to recruitment, planning, and funding strategies and directed the CAO, with the assistance of the Department of Human Resources, to further explore potential incentives to address staffing shortages.

On February 27, 2024 (16), the Board directed the CAO to work with Probation to look for opportunities and resources to enhance staff wellness and mental health and return to the Board in 180 days with recommendations for enhancing the wellness program that would benefit the department and its staff. Upon direction of the Board, Probation staff reviewed existing wellness

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resources and researched various options for enhancing the wellness program. Probation's wellness program currently consists of a Wellness Unit, which includes a Peer Support program, a voluntary Chaplain, an Honor Guard, specifically tailored training on wellness, and contracted support services.

The purpose of the Wellness Unit is to provide information and tools to support, encourage, and promote staff wellness. The Probation Wellness Unit develops, implements, and manages a comprehensive wellness program which takes a proactive approach when officers are in crisis, identifies additional ways officers and their families can be supported and advances departmentwide wellness initiatives. The Wellness Unit provides access to support groups, therapy and counseling through County and contracted providers, treatment programs, and retreats.

Peer Support members provide emotional first aid to staff during times of crisis or critical incidents, and resources for professional help. The Chaplain offers a presence of spiritual and emotional care and counseling for sworn and non-sworn personnel. Chaplains promote the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of our employees, officiate at various department functions, and provide support during critical incidents or times of crises. The Honor Guard is a specialized detail comprised of sworn officers and a supervisor. They represent Probation at a variety of ceremonial events, including Police Officer Memorials, Award Ceremonies, and government activities requiring the presentation and posting of colors. The contracted support services include one full time Staff Support Specialist on site at both East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility and Youth Transition Campus to assist with needs that arise during shifts and confidential counseling for staff and eligible family members.

The County staff recommendations to expand Probation's current wellness program include reallocating one additional staff for the Wellness Unit while continuing to evaluate future needs. These dedicated staff will form a Wellness Committee to conduct monthly department-wide wellness events and support the creation of a dedicated wellness policy. Probation recommends expanding the Chaplaincy program to select, train, and integrate new chaplains. Another recommendation is to create a subcommittee under the Departmental Safety Officer to identify safety issues and concerns within Probation locations, assist with determining responsible parties of any issues, create solutions to safety problems, and develop goals, benchmarks, and timelines for resolution. Probation also recommends increasing wellness training opportunities such as Emotional Survival, HeartMath, Blue Courage, Suicide Prevention, Mitigating Burnout & Managing Stress, Transforming Stress, Military Vets in Crisis, Maintaining Objectivity & Optimism, and Trauma Resilience, and ongoing specialized training for the Peer Support team to include an offsite retreat style training for team building and trauma processing. These trainings will help staff prepare and provide support for the emotional and mental impacts of their daily work, develop healthy coping mechanisms and resilience strategies. Finally, Probation is procuring a wellness app to be available for all staff. The wellness app provides staff in stressful occupations

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and their family members with on-demand access to confidential and relevant wellness resources. Investing in a wellness app can improve an individual's wellbeing which may result in increased retention, signaling Probation's commitment to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of staff.

Today's actions request the Board to receive County staff recommendations for enhancing the existing wellness program that would benefit Probation Department staff, authorize the Chief Probation Officer to apply for grant funds related to staff wellness and mental health and execute all required grant documents and related contracts through June 30, 2034, and waive Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts. The Probation Department requests to waive Board Policy B-29 so that Probation may apply for multiple grants without requiring the Board to consider each grant application. Probation shall return to the Board for acceptance of grant funds.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Empower, Equity and Justice Strategic Initiatives of the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, by accepting County staff recommendations for enhancing the existing wellness program that would benefit Probation and its staff, including increasing training opportunities and procuring a wellness app.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrew Strong for

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A