



Date: August 30, 2017

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *P.H. West*

From: Michael A. DuRee, Fire Chief *M.A. DuRee*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **HEART Team History and Data**

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This memorandum provides information regarding the Homelessness Education and Response Team (HEART) in response to questions raised by members of the City Council during the August 8, 2017 Budget Hearing.

The HEART (i.e., HEART Team or Team), which is comprised of two Firefighter/Paramedics, has been in operation since November 30, 2016, responding to calls Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The mission of the HEART Team is to reduce the number of Fire Department responses to individuals experiencing homelessness through rapid response to calls for service, collaboration with Continuum of Care partners; and to educate Fire Department staff and members of the community regarding local resources and issues surrounding homelessness.

As of August 11, 2017, the HEART Team had made over 650 contacts with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) patients and/or individuals experiencing homelessness. More than 300 of these contacts reflect 911 calls for service in which Fire units were initially dispatched. The Team monitors the radio for calls in their immediate vicinity that potentially involve an individual experiencing homelessness. Team members determine which calls to respond to based on field experience and the nature and location of the call. When responding to calls, the Team assesses the situation and determines the patient's needs. For more than 95 percent of the EMS calls responded to, the Team was the first unit to arrive at the scene; and, in most cases, the Team was able to cancel a responding fire engine, paramedic rescue, or both.

As part of the HEART Team's outreach efforts, 43 individuals, including 8 military veterans, have been connected with Continuum of Care resources; 8 individuals were connected to drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities; 1 was connected to a domestic violence shelter; and, 3 were connected to temporary shelter. Further, in partnership with the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD), 21 individuals were placed under a 5150 hold; 1 individual was placed in a board and care facility; and, 2 were placed under conservatorship. In addition to outreach for individuals experiencing homelessness, the Team responded to two calls of patients with no pulse or breathing. In both cases, the Team was the first unit to arrive on scene and was able to successfully perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

In addition to the above statistics, HEART Team members have shared the following experiences:

- A 26-year female who suffered from mental illness and drug addiction. Team members made numerous attempts to connect her to appropriate services. With the assistance of LBPD's Quality of Life Team, a total of five 5150 holds were placed, resulting in five hospitalizations. Eventually, with the proper treatment, her mental illness was stabilized and her drug addiction ended. With the help of the Quality of Life Team, the Team reunited her with her out-of-state family, where she is currently staying.
- A 67-year-old female who suffered from mental illness. This individual was considered chronically homeless and was unable to trust others. After repeated attempts, and gradually building trust, the Team was able to connect her to a board and care facility, where she is currently staying.
- An elderly male who had been loitering around the Long Beach Courthouse. The Team confirmed that he was homeless and unable to care for himself. They contacted staff from the City's Multi-Service Center for the Homeless (MSC), who reconnected him with his family in Los Angeles.
- A chronically homeless individual who was staying in Belmont Shore. This individual suffered from alcohol addiction and a seizure disorder. Eventually, after many attempts, this individual accepted the help of the Team and was admitted to the hospital where he received treatment for both of his issues. Team staff picked him up when he was discharged from the hospital, assisted him in obtaining his medications from the pharmacy, and connected him to the Long Beach Rescue Mission, where he currently is staying.

The above experiences represent a small sampling of the many positive patient outcomes associated with the HEART Team in its first year of operation. Based on FY 17's response numbers, the Fire Department estimates an annual call volume of approximately 1,100 and an increase in the number of referrals for services.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (562) 570-2505.

MAD:DH  
Q:/ADMINISTRATION/LETTERS AND MEMOS/TFF HEART UNIT HISTORY AND DATA

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