

Date: March 23, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager



From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services



For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Status Update – Get Help Application**

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At its August 20, 2019 meeting, the City Council requested the City Manager to evaluate the feasibility of working with Get Help, or a similar service, to develop City-specific mobile and web-based applications (apps) for City staff and Long Beach residents who work or interact with people experiencing homelessness and/or addiction or other mental health issues and report back. The apps would provide updated real-time data on bed availability for shelters, rehab, detox, medical detox, and other types of public, private, and nonprofit beds. The apps would also provide additional information to City employees and residents about services such as food pantries, showers, or locations to get ID vouchers. This memorandum provides an update on this request, the evaluation completed on that specific concept and progress on implementing more technology-based solutions to address homelessness.

The Health and Human Services Department (Health Department) interviewed numerous companies, including Get Help, that have the capacity to provide real-time referral and access technologies. During the timeframe of the interviews, the Health Department was asked to participate in the City's Start-Up in Residency (STIR) program, which invites start-ups and more established organizations to develop apps to meet City needs. City staff included in the STIR competition a request for a real-time availability bed app that could be used by City staff and service providers who work with those experiencing homelessness. Fourteen proposals were received in response to the STIR request, including a submission from Get Help. The proposals were reviewed by a panel comprised of representatives from the Technology and Innovation Department, Office of Civic Innovation, and Health Department. Open Lattice was selected to develop a pilot real-time availability bed app during the four-month STIR timeframe.

Open Lattice has partnered with the Justice Lab for data integration opportunities to improve coordinated service opportunities between the Police, Fire and Health Departments to support services for high utilizers of the criminal justice system and homeless services. Open Lattice developed the base model for the app utilizing feedback and guidance from the Homeless Services Division (HSD). It began outreach to local nonprofit organizations that provide shelter, treatment, and other services to determine interest and requirements for their participation in a real-time bed app. However, real-time apps require that providers have the technology, staffing resources, and a willingness to participate in the effort. The conversations with local substance use providers and shelters who would need to utilize the app in order for it to be successful felt that they were not in a position to start this new system. Reasons given included management of beds and staffing requirements for real-time reporting and other significant data and grant reporting required by other funders. Given the City does not hold contracts with these providers, there was no requirement to participate, and the City could only request that they join this effort.

Without the participation of the providers, a bed availability app would not be able to properly function.

As an alternative, to continue to pursue technological solutions in the spirit of the City Council request to have technology assist with our response to homelessness, the HSD has been participating in a number of technology-based solutions including an app to enhance coordination among homeless services partners, to streamline the process for accessing HMIS records in the field, and combining these data with geo location to ensure future outreach efforts are tracked and more efficient. In addition, the HSD is participating in the Los Angeles County Homeless Outreach Portal response so when someone from Long Beach requests information or support through that system, the City and its partners can respond and engage. The HSD has also implemented a new management information system that will allow for real time access to shelter bed availability for those shelters the City funds. In addition, the Health Department has implemented a referral platform (Unite Us) that can provide information and referrals to providers that can be used for people experiencing homelessness, as well as others living in Long Beach seeking access to services. These solutions are actively being pursued or have been implemented and staff believe these efforts meet the Council's intent to better streamline coordination, access to data and services, and improved outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

For further information, please contact me at [kelly.colopy@longbeach.gov](mailto:kelly.colopy@longbeach.gov), or by phone at (562) 570-4016.

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