

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Public Safety Committee

### 2023 – 2025 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6, Chair  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2 Marina  
Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

**Tuesday, February 20, 2024**

**9:30 AM**

**Council Briefing Room at  
City Hall Complex**

The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 9:33 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes from the January 16, 2024 Public Safety Committee Meeting

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to Approve the minutes of the January 16, 2024 Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Cabello Havrda, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito  
**Absent:** Kaur

### Briefing and Possible Action on

**2. Briefing by The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) on the collaborative development of a Strategic Guide focusing on the intersection of Mental Health and Public Safety.**  
[Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Health]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Item and Jessie Higgins, Chief Mental Health Officer, who provided a briefing on the Mental Health Public Safety Strategic Guide (Guide). She noted that the briefing would review the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health which included physical, emotional and communal health.

Higgins stated that in April 2022, the City had developed the SA Forward Plan which was a mental health approach to COVID-19 impacts. She noted that the Plan had a mental health approach that included social inequities, institutional inequities, living conditions, risk behaviors, disease and mortality. She spoke to the goal of the Plan which was to improve coordination of mental health services by strengthening community assets to ensure emotional, psychological and physical health. She added that the Plan was coordinated in partnership with the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD).

Higgins reviewed current mental health initiatives/processes currently performed in partnership with SAFD, SAPD and Metro Health which included public safety and behavioral threat engagements. She stated that due to this work, the Guide was developed with input from City departments and community partners to include Bexar County, South Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC), hospitals and non-profit organizations.

Higgins reviewed the timeline for the guide development to include stakeholder meetings, draft development and tentative consideration by the City Council in May 2024.

## **DISCUSSION**

Chair Cabello Havrda expressed her support for the development of the Guide and its timeliness. She stressed that the community had requested the Guide and it should be a priority to collaborate with other entities in developing the Guide. Chair Cabello Havrda stated that while the response and training had come a long way, more was still needed.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked if 9-1-1 data had been analyzed to identify mental health issues when individuals called for mental health incidents. Police Chief McManus stated that mental health identification and dispatching of mental health clinicians was not in place due to lack of clinicians to be able to go to incidents to assist. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that staff was currently working on hiring clinical staff and would provide an update of outreach to partner organizations and human resources channels to expand possible candidates.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked what the timeline was to train clinicians. Higgins stated that there was a large amount of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding throughout Bexar County and City organizations which caused a shortage of clinicians since many programs were hiring them. In addition, the training that was to be conducted was intense and would take additional time to implement, according to Higgins. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that a set timeline could further assist in providing the services in a timelier manner.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked if SAPD mental health resources were being diverted to other areas since clinicians were not available. Chief McManus stated that those services were not being diverted and those resources were still deployed as needed to mental health incidents. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that staff would provide data on current deployment of SAPD staff and practices implemented when responding to mental health incidents.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed his support of the inclusion of adverse childhood experiences and varied issues in the development of the Guide. He stressed the importance of following a wholistic and root cause approach in the public health policy development. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that upcoming budget discussions needed to address mental health issues and policy development especially in responding to 9-1-1 mental health calls.

Councilmember Kaur agreed with her fellow Councilmembers to add a deadline to the hiring of clinical staff. She supported the public health approach that included consideration of inequities and continuum of services.

Councilmember Kaur stated that it was important to look at all areas of response to different calls and how to provide services downstream. Higgins stated that staff communicated closely and often with partner organizations to stay on top of available services and avenues for delivery of those services. She stressed the importance of channels of communication and education to the public of available mental health resources.

Councilmember Kaur asked for clarification on the questions that would be asked during the collection of service data and programs. Higgins stated that staff would be meeting with all partners to ensure that services were captured at all levels to include locally and at the State level. Higgins stated that data was collected at the State level and that data was made available to the City so staff did not have to duplicate efforts in gaining valuable data. Councilmember Kaur requested that data should be obtained by individuals receiving services in order to monitor effective services.

This item was for briefing purposes only.

**3. Briefing by The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) on mental health initiatives funded with American Rescue Plan Act Funds. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Health]**

Jessie Higgins, Metro Health Chief Mental Health Officer, provided a briefing on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds implementation. She stated that ARPA funds were initially received in February 2022 when City Council approved the Mental Health Spending Plan for \$19.3 million for the first round of funding and then \$3.6 million in the second phase. She stated that a total of \$27.2 million had been approved for implementation in the areas of youth mental health, older adult mental health, homelessness and mental health, harm reduction and domestic violence.

Higgins stated that funding was disbursed as follows: For youth mental health there were 22 agencies awarded funding totally \$18 million. She noted that under Older Adult Mental Health Programs, seven agencies were awarded \$5 million for services and four agencies were awarded \$2.6 million in funding for homelessness and mental health services. Higgins added that two agencies were awarded

\$634,000 for harm reduction and three agencies were awarded \$1 million for domestic violence programs/services. She noted that standardized contract management and monitoring of the awarded programs was conducted by Metro Health and the Department of Human Services.

## DISCUSSION

Chair Cabello Havrda expressed her support of the mental health programs managed by City Staff and partnering agencies. She noted that the impact of this funding made a strong impact to the community. Chair Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on the investments provided to the partner agencies and the \$27 million awarded and noted that there were some agencies that had not spent any funding awarded. Higgins stated that agencies that had not spent their allocated funds were being monitored and tracking of plans for spending. Deputy City Manager Villagomez reiterated that the agencies were being monitored and that analysis was continuously performed to ensure awarded agencies were on track to spend funding and provide services.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that when funds were being disbursed, he expressed concern that many organizations within Council District 2 had applied for funding and were denied. He stated that he was assured that while agencies were not awarded in his council district, residents would be provided services. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested data on the demographics of services provided by council district.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked for clarification on the deadline for spending awarded funds. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that funds should be expended by December 2026 and allocated by December 2024.

Councilmember Kaur asked how many staff were allocated for grant monitoring of these grants. Higgins reviewed the staffing allocated for grant monitoring which included 24 grant compliance staff within Metro Health.

Councilmember Kaur asked how outcomes for work completed by agencies was being monitored. Higgins stated that agencies were asked what specific services they were providing, assessment of sessions provided and responses by individuals receiving. Councilmember Kaur supported the assessment plan and noted opportunities for collaboration between agencies so as to serve those needing services in a timely and efficient manner.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito agreed with the request for data on demographics of individuals served by council district. She asked what services were being provided for individuals that did not fall under the five mentioned categories. Higgins stated that the specialized categories were set by ARPA guidelines but agreed that there were some gaps in services but that programs were also available as identified. Higgins noted that the San Antonio Community Resource Directory (SACRD) had developed a portal of providers which included providers for under insured, not insured and others needing mental health services.

This Item was for briefing purposes only.

## Consent

4. **Briefing and possible action on a San Antonio Police Department supplemental grant award in an amount not to exceed \$357,000.00 for the FY24 Comprehensive Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) Grant from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]**

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to Approve. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** McKee-Rodriguez, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito  
**Absent:** Kaur

#### **Executive Session**

Executive Session was not held.

#### **Consideration of items for future meetings**

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 AM.

#### **Approved**

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*Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*