



City of Fairfax, Virginia

City Council Regular Meeting

Agenda Item # 13b

City Council Meeting 9/27/2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

FROM: Robert A. Stalzer, City Manager *RA Stalzer*

SUBJECT: Discussion and Update on Marcus Alert Legislation and City Co-Responder Team Implementation.

ISSUE(S): Required implementation by the Commonwealth of Virginia of the statewide Marcus Alert system. The requirements include creation of statewide regional crisis call centers and establishment of a specialized behavioral health response from law enforcement when responding to behavioral health situations. The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board has oversight responsibility for Marcus Alert implementation.

SUMMARY: The Marcus-David Peters Act (or Marcus Alert) was signed into law by the Governor in late 2020, with the goal of providing an enhanced behavioral health response for individuals experiencing a crisis related to mental health, substance abuse, or developmental disabilities. The statewide implementation is structured in a phased approach and corresponds to the federal 988 legislation requiring the establishment of a 3-digit telephone number that functions as a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

The Marcus Alert system includes the following:

- Regional 988 call centers for behavioral health crisis response
- A standardized 4-level triage framework for behavioral health crisis response
- Mobile crisis teams (both county- specific and regional “specialty” teams)
- Specialized law enforcement response including crisis intervention trained officers or co-responder teams consisting of mental health clinicians, crisis intervention trained police officers, and community paramedics.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Marcus Alert requirements were amended to allow localities with a population of 40,000 or less to opt out of full implementation. Although this amendment allows the City some choices, the City continues to have responsibilities related to Marcus Alert including diverting behavioral health emergency calls from law enforcement. Currently, police and fire respond to approximately 600 behavioral and mental health calls for service per year.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Adopted FY23 Budget identified formation of a co-responder team consisting of a crisis intervention specialist, a community paramedic and two master police officers as unfunded FY23 FTE priorities. These positions were identified for possible FY23 funding at a quarterly budget review. The estimated FY23 cost to hire a crisis intervention specialist, a community paramedic and associated operating expenditures beginning January 2023 is \$159,413. The estimated FY24 costs including the two aforementioned positions and two crisis intervention trained master police officers, equipment and vehicle and operating expenses is \$739,918.

RECOMMENDATION: Allocate funding necessary to staff a co-responder team consisting of a crisis intervention specialist and a community paramedic. The two master police officer positions should be considered as a part of the FY24 budget process.

ALTERNATIVE

COURSE OF ACTION: Do not create a co-responder team or modify the team composition.

RESPONSIBLE STAFF: Lesley Abashian, Director of Human Services

COORDINATION: Brian Orndoff, Battalion Chief EMS Operations, City of Fairfax Fire Department
Captain Natalie Hinesley, City of Fairfax Police Department

ATTACHMENTS: PowerPoint Presentation