

To: Anne Donahue
Cc: William Lippert, Lori Houghton, and others
From: Michael Schirling
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020
Subject: Re: placeholder language - SYNOPSIS AND REPORTS ATTACHED

Good morning,

Below is a BRIEF SYNOPSIS of a few key points. Attached are historic and current studies and statistics showing the efficacy of expanding these programs within the public safety.

Mike

What follows is an abbreviated assessment of the challenges presented by a shift in the funding model from Department of Public Safety to the Department of Mental Health. A few of those challenges include:

From a budget perspective, the \$525k in funds proposed to be used to expand this initiative (from the 2 barracks with mental health workers to 9 barracks) are commingled in our budget and are an extension of projected vacancy savings. Removing the funds from DPS will create budget shortfalls related to that commingling, included but not limited to attrition savings. We will face a related shortfall at the end of the fiscal year, the extent of which is not able to be directly calculated but could run as high as \$200k or more.

Operationally, expansion of this existing program is an essential component of the modernization and future shift in delivery models for law enforcement and public safety more broadly. Delivery of these services is best suited to be an extension of the daily emergency service response in the public safety environment, connected to our public safety answering and dispatch centers, law enforcement/policing, and public safety broadly. Removing the program from its current position as an extension of public safety service delivery would hamper current and future efforts to innovate and expand the array of creative problem-solving options throughout the State and could create a chilling effect on future innovation.

More important, the primary entryway for many in crisis is 911. For years, public safety, first responders, and emergency departments have seen dramatic increases in calls and services provided to those in crisis. The tools and resources are needed at this entry point to these systems more critically than anywhere else.

A few background facts about existing programs:

For many years, municipalities, local governments, state agencies, many advocates, and law enforcement leaders have advocated for expansion of this program. Startup funding has been the stumbling block.

In all experiences with social / mental health workers directly partnered with law enforcement ranging from the original social worker in Bellows Falls to the street outreach teams in Chittenden County to the two mental health workers partnered in the St. Albans and Westminster Barracks:

Call volume from those experiencing mental health crisis has decreased.

The number of responses requiring law enforcement to mental health emergencies has stabilized.

Connection to ongoing services and supports, including earlier interventions, by those experiencing crisis have improved.

There are significant benefits to connecting these outreach workers directly to front line emergency response. In many instances, they can intercede in and handle calls that would otherwise be directed to other emergency responders.

Statistics have shown marked improvement in emergency service utilization, emergency room visits, incarceration / lodgings at correctional facilities, and cost.

Several reports showing the efficacy of replicating these programs statewide are attached.