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AGENCY

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: June 25, 2024

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: **Phebe Bell**

SUBJECT: Resolution approving execution of a renewal contract with Sierra Mental Wellness Group for the provision of services including crisis intervention, mobile crisis services, and the operation of a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) in the maximum amount of \$4,919,533 for the term of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the attached Resolution.

FUNDING: Contract services are supported by: Guaranteed-bed fees from Sierra Nevada Memorial- Miners Hospital (SNMH); patient revenues for treatment, including Medi-Cal and private insurance reimbursement; department realignment; MHSA (Mental Health Services Act) Funding, Crisis Care Mobile Units (CCMU) funding through SAMHSA, and grant funding received through the Sheriff's office. Services are within the Department's FY 2024/25 budget, and there are no County general fund dollars required in the Agreement.

BACKGROUND: The contract includes the following components: Crisis Intervention and Mobile Crisis Services; and the Operation of a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU).

Operation of a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU):

In 2015, the County and its stakeholders identified the need and advocated for the expansion of the County's System of Care to include the development of a Crisis Stabilization Unit where individuals can receive crisis services, including psychotherapy and medication services for up to 23 consecutive hours per event, in order to prevent further decompensation and the need for acute inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

For over forty years, Sierra Mental Wellness Group has been providing comprehensive mental health services in Placer County and has contracted for a number of years with Nevada County for the provision of quality crisis intervention services such as crisis assessments and arranging for clients to be admitted to psychiatric hospitals on both an involuntary and voluntary basis.

Under this renewal agreement, Sierra Mental Wellness Group will continue to provide management and oversight of the CSU. The CSU offers a much calmer, therapeutic environment for individuals experiencing a psychiatric crisis, as the CSU provides physical separation from non-psychiatric patients at the Emergency Department. The Contractor will provide staffing to meet all criteria for Medi-Cal billing certification standards, as well as maintaining a documented staffing plan for the CSU that covers staffing strategies for business hours, after hours, and weekends.

The goal of the CSU is to:

- Improve access to the most appropriate treatment resources and decrease the utilization of hospital emergency departments, jails, and homeless programs for behavioral health emergencies;
- Provide timely aid to de-escalate the crisis episode, stabilize patients quickly, and assist them to return to their pre-crisis level of functioning;
- Reduce the number of days of inpatient hospital stays and costs; and
- Increase patients' ability to receive treatment within their community and to engage in local support systems.

Crisis Intervention and Mobile Crisis Services:

This is a renewal contract with Sierra Mental Wellness Group for mandated crisis and intervention services. Crisis services are case-driven initial evaluation and referral services for patients needing immediate mental health crisis intervention. The therapeutic response may be accomplished by phone and/or face-to-face contacts. The response encompasses multiple functions, including evaluations according to Section 5150 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, to evaluate whether or not a patient is a danger to themselves or others or unable to function in the community. If needed, the Crisis Workers are responsible for assisting in the admission and paperwork completion for the patient to a 5150-facility designated by the County.

Services may also involve direct counseling and/or mental status assessments, information regarding mental health services and referrals to alternative resources, assisting clients in obtaining other social or human services as required, and consultation with referring agencies or client's significant others.

Crisis Workers provide assessments and evaluations of Mental Health clients at the Behavioral Health Clinic, Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital emergency room, Tahoe Forest Hospital, and/or other designated areas. Crisis workers respond and triage each case according to the individual's needs, providing immediate brief intervention and follow-up for people experiencing emotional crisis in their lives. In cases of protracted crisis admissions, Contractor shall also provide supplemental support staff to assist in the process.

Mobile Crisis Services include two full time employees embedded with the Nevada County Sheriff's Office and 24/7 Behavioral Health Mobile Crisis Team. Mobile Crisis workers respond

to mental health crises in the community, assess the situation, provide brief intervention, provide safety planning and support, and transport to the emergency department if further care is needed for stabilization.

It is recommended that the Board approve this renewal contract as these contracted services provide an essential resource for Nevada County families and further enhances the crisis continuum of care for residents of Nevada County.

Item initiated and approved by: Phebe Bell, MSW – Director of Behavioral Health