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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: July 28, 2020
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: **Phebe Bell**
SUBJECT: Resolution approving execution of Amendment #1 to the renewal contract with Sierra Mental Wellness Group for the provision of services in relation to crisis intervention, community client services, and services relating to the operation of a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) increasing the maximum contract price from \$1,133,993 to \$1,165,988 (an increase of \$31,995) for the term of January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020 due to an unanticipated increase in expenses. (RES. 19-620)

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. Services are within the Department's F/Y 2019/20 budget, and there are no County general fund dollars required in the Agreement. No budget amendment is needed.

BACKGROUND: Per Resolution 19-620, the Board approved a renewal contract with Sierra Mental Wellness Group for mandated crisis and intervention services for January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

The contract includes the following components: Crisis Intervention and Community Client Services; and Services in Relation to the Operation of a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU).

Services in Relation to the 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.

On February 10, 2015, per Resolution Nos. 15-067 and 15-068, the Board of Supervisors approved both the Operational and the Ground Lease Agreements with Sierra Nevada Memorial-Miners Hospital for the purpose of establishing the four-bed Crisis Stabilization Unit to be located on hospital grounds.

In addition, the County issued an RFP (Request for Proposals) related to retaining a Contractor to operate, in coordination with the Nevada County Behavioral Health Department, a Crisis Stabilization Unit 24 hours per day, seven (7) days per week (24/7). Under the County's RFP Process, the contract was awarded to Sierra Mental Wellness Group and as a result on October 13, 2015, Per Resolution No. 15-464, the Board of Supervisors approved a contract with Sierra Mental Wellness Group to develop and implement a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU).

For over 40 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 Crisis Response Team (CRT) and 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.

Eligibility criteria for admission of a client to the CSU include:

- Eighteen (18) years of age or older;
- At risk of needing psychiatric hospitalization;
- Discharged or transferred (while on a 5150 hold) from the Hospital's Emergency Department (ED), and determined to be both medically cleared of any need for inpatient medical procedures and medically and behaviorally appropriate for the CSU; Clients may be admitted to the CSU while on a 5150. This could be during times the CRT is in the process of finding a psychiatric bed; and admission assessments by the CRT will consider the client's psychiatric stability and any indications that the client is a danger to self or others prior to placement in the CSU.

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 and 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 Community Client 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 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, as well as, maintaining after hours phone coverage for the County's Truckee Clinic.

Crisis Workers provide assessments and evaluations of Mental Health clients at the Behavioral Health Clinic, Jail, Juvenile Hall, 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.

It is recommended that the Board approve this amendment increasing the contract maximum to cover unanticipated expenses in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic as these contracted services provides 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