



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

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Second District

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Third District

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Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: February 6, 2024

01

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT:

AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE BY THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TO TREAT OPIOID USE DISORDER; ESTABLISH APPROPRIATIONS; EXECUTE CONTRACTS RELATED TO THE GRANT, AND AUTHORIZE COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENTS FOR GRANT IMPLEMENTATION SERVICES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On October 10, 2023 (13), the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the updated priorities of the Opioid Settlement Framework (Framework) that details how the County of San Diego (County) will utilize settlement funds to stem and reverse the trend of overdoses and deaths caused by the opioid crisis. The County's Framework includes allocating funding for healthcare integration initiatives designed to improve access to care, minimize stigma, lower costs, and improve overall health outcomes for people with an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office, a division of San Diego County Fire, has created the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative, a pilot program that provides buprenorphine medication to patients by EMS professionals in a prehospital setting, and is designed to treat symptoms of opioid withdrawal, thus allowing the patient to focus on treatment and break their cycle of addiction. The Buprenorphine Induction Initiative aligns with the County's approved Framework goal of Harm Reduction, an approach that emphasizes working directly with OUD patients to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission, along with improving the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of those served.

The EMS Office has been awarded a grant by the Public Health Institute (PHI) to support the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative. The PHI funding provides an opportunity for EMS to regionally expand the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative and allow greater access to buprenorphine medication for persons with an OUD. Today's action requests the acceptance of \$ 375,000 in grant funds from the PHI, along with authorization by the Director of San Diego County Fire, or designee, to execute grant agreement documents with PHI and distribute grant funds to participating fire and EMS agencies in accordance with the County's Department of Purchasing and Contracting established guidelines, and PHI grant guidelines. Funds will be primarily used to train EMS professionals on the administration of buprenorphine medication, purchase of the

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medication, and patient costs associated with navigation to services. All grant funds must be expended by April 15, 2024.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Authorize the acceptance of \$375,000 in grant funds from the Public Health Institute's CA Bridge Program for the performance period of March 1, 2023, to April 15, 2024, to support local buprenorphine pilot programs and authorize the Director of San Diego County Fire, or designee, to execute all required grant documents and agreements, including any annual extensions, amendments, and/or revisions thereto that do not materially impact or alter the services or funding level.
2. Establish appropriations of \$375,000 in County Fire, Services & Supplies, for the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative based on Public Health Institute's CA Bridge Program grant. **(4 VOTES)**
3. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue competitive solicitations for Opioid Use Disorder services, and upon successful negotiation and determination of fair and reasonable price, award contracts for an initial term of one (1) year with up to four (4) one-year options and an additional six months if needed, subject to the availability of funds and a need for the services, and to amend the contracts and other current contracts as needed to reflect the changes to services and funding, subject to approval of the Director of San Diego County Fire.
4. Authorize the Director of San Diego County Fire, or their designee, to distribute grant funds to participating fire and EMS agencies, and amend current contracts with them, as needed, to reflect changes to services and funding.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County EMS Office's Buprenorphine Induction Initiative provides medication-assisted treatment to patients in the community with an Opioid Use Disorder in a tailored but time critical manner, along with access to social and medical services to overcome opioid addiction. Acceptance of this funding will allow Emergency Medical Services professionals to equitably deliver new and innovative services to vulnerable individuals, along with advancing the Board of Supervisors efforts to combat the opioid crisis. De-identified buprenorphine patient data will be collected from all EMS agencies participating in the initiative and analyzed for quality assurance and equity purposes.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Acceptance of Public Health Institute grant funds will allow the County EMS Office to further support local agency implementation of the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative. This action contributes to the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goals to protect the health and well-being of residents and visitors alike by providing access to tailored healthcare resources and improving the Emergency Medical Services delivery system. Furthermore, it provides just and equitable

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access to County services with investments focused on vulnerable individuals and underserved communities.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Plan for San Diego County Fire. If approved, this request will result in current year estimated one-time costs and revenue of \$375,000. The funding source is grant funds from the Public Health Institute. There are no match requirements for this grant. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken significant steps to address the opioid crisis, including but not limited to the adoption of the Comprehensive Harm Reduction Strategy on June 8, 2021 (4), The development of a culturally and age-appropriate media campaign to prevent fentanyl overdoses in youth on October 19, 2021 (2), declaring illicit fentanyl a public health crisis on June 28, 2022 (22), enhancing fentanyl education programs and strengthening harm reduction efforts for young people on October 11, 2022 (11), and approving the Opioid Settlement Framework priorities on October 10, 2023 (13), which included support for a buprenorphine pilot program to treat people suffering from an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). Acceptance of the Public Health Institute’s (PHI) grant to support County EMS’s Buprenorphine Induction Initiative is aligned with the Board’s previous actions to address the opioid crisis. Funds will be used to support implementation efforts and improve the overall quality of EMS services to the public.

Buprenorphine Induction Initiative

Buprenorphine is a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medication that prevents withdrawal symptoms caused by addiction to opioids like heroin, oxycodone, fentanyl, and hydromorphone. Furthermore, buprenorphine reduces opioid cravings, thus lowering the harm associated with opioid misuse. Traditionally, buprenorphine could only be administered to patients in hospital and clinical settings, but in 2022, the County’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office, a Division of San Diego County Fire, received state authorization for the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative, a pilot program that allows specially trained paramedics to administer the medication in the field. Utilization of buprenorphine in combination with counseling and behavioral health therapy provides a whole-patient approach to treating opioid dependency. PHI funding will further support the County’s Buprenorphine Induction Initiative by supporting training of EMS professionals on the administration of buprenorphine medication, purchase of the medication, and patient costs associated with navigation to services.

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An EMS professional in the field, such as a paramedic or emergency medical technician, frequently makes contact with patients experiencing opioid withdrawal or an overdose. Such encounters require EMS professionals to transfer the patient to a hospital emergency department to receive medication to treat their opioid addiction. However, some OUD patients refuse transport to the emergency room, thus creating an access gap to vital medication and addiction services. The Buprenorphine Induction Initiative is designed to bridge this access gap by allowing trained EMS staff to administer buprenorphine in the initial encounter with the patient. Furthermore, EMS staff will actively manage cases and conduct follow ups with OUD patients after providing them with buprenorphine and additional recovery resources.

Currently, the Escondido Fire Department and the San Dieguito EMS District (CSA-17), which provides paramedic-level ambulance transportation services to Del Mar, Encinitas, Solana Beach, and Rancho Santa Fe, are the only EMS agencies with an active buprenorphine program. PHI funds will serve as a catalyst for wider implementation of the Buprenorphine Induction Initiative by paying the initial program startup costs for an EMS agency, thus eliminating a financial barrier to entry. Increasing the number of EMS agencies trained to administer buprenorphine medication throughout the County will provide individuals suffering from OUD access to critical resources designed to end their addiction and reduce opioid related overdose deaths in our region. The focus will be to support EMS agencies operating in regions with high opioid use and overdose rates and able to provide data that satisfies the grant requirements. Furthermore, de-identified buprenorphine patient data will be collected from all EMS agencies receiving PHI funding, which will provide vital data on buprenorphine's effectiveness to combat the overall opioid crisis.

Today's action requests the acceptance of \$375,000 in grant funds from the PHI, along with authorization by the Director of San Diego County Fire, or designee, to execute grant agreement documents with PHI and distribute grant funds to participating fire and EMS agencies in accordance with the County's Department of Purchasing and Contracting established guidelines, and PHI grant guidelines. To expedite implementation of the grant funds, the EMS Office will leverage existing agreements with public ambulance transportation operators to amend their contracts to provide additional resources to communities with the greatest needs. Funds allocated to EMS agencies will primarily be used to train EMS professionals on the administration of buprenorphine medication, purchase of the medication, and patient costs associated with navigation to services.

This is a cost reimbursement grant, and the period of performance is March 1, 2023, to April 15, 2024. PHI will allocate funding to the County EMS Office in four (4) phases. The first and second phase encompasses the administrative steps that the EMS Office staff have completed to qualify for the funding. The third and fourth phase of the funding encompasses the training and supply costs for EMS agencies awarded, along with the data collection and reporting requirements. The entirety of the grant must be expended by April 15, 2024.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed actions support the Community and Equity Strategic Initiatives of the County of San Diego’s 2024-2029 Strategic Plan by addressing the provision of robust, equitable, and accessible emergency medical services throughout the region.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah E. Aghassi", with the word "FOR" written in blue capital letters below it.

SARAH E. AGHASSI
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A