



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA LETTER

Department Name:

Sheriff-Corner

Department Number:

032

Agenda Date:

July 14, 2026

Placement:

Administrative Agenda

Estimated Time:

N/A

Continued Item:

No

If Yes, date from:

N/A

Vote Required:

4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director: Bill Brown, Sheriff-Coroner

CONTACT: Susan Farley, Communications Dispatch Manager

SUBJECT: Acceptance of Cash Donation Greater than \$10,000 from The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas (MMHPI)

Concurrences:

County Counsel Concurrence:

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: ITD, CEO Budget

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Authorize the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office to accept a cash donation of \$39,562.50 to be used for a one-year subscription to Comms Coach, a GovWorx product, that will be used in the Public Safety Dispatch Center for quality assurance and improvement;
- b) Approve Budget Revision Request #BJE-0010991 (Attachment B); and

- c) Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms which do not involve any commitment to any special project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment and are therefore not a project under California Environmental Quality Act (CEAQ) pursuant to section 15378(b)(4) of the CEQA guidelines.

Summary Text:

This item is before your Board to authorize the acceptance of the referenced cash donation in accordance with California Governmental Code section 25322, and County policies and procedures for the acceptance of donations and gifts.

The Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office (SBSO) is requesting Board approval to accept a cash donation from the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas (MMHPI). MMHPI, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, approved a donation in the amount of \$39,562.50 to SBSO to fund a one-year subscription to Comms Coach, a GovWorx product, for the SBSO Public Safety Dispatch Center. Comms Coach uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide quality assurance and improvement for phone calls into 9-1-1 centers.

Discussion:

The MMHPI and the SBSO Public Safety Dispatch Center are conducting a pilot program that introduces a Person-Centered Triage Approach (PCTA) to mental health calls received into the 9-1-1 center. Goals of PCTA include giving a caller a voice in what they would like done to assist them, decriminalizing mental health calls when it is possible and appropriate by diverting calls that meet specific criteria to mental health services, and being mindful of the mental health of call takers.

To evaluate if the PCTA is effective at the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center, there is a need to perform quality assurance on calls where mental health is a factor. This is time consuming and imperfect since it requires that the call taker manually tag when a call has a mental health component to identify if the call should be reviewed. Additionally, when calls are reviewed, it is difficult to establish if there is a pattern of behavior for a specific person or if there are common practices in the center that would require coaching and training.

SBSO began researching what solutions might improve quality assurance, consistency, and quality improvement. Comms Coach was discovered by the Communications Manager at dispatch as an effective solution to mental health calls. Comms Coach is an AI program that, among other things, identifies mental health calls and provides quality assurance based on set standards. At the time the product was identified, it was the only one on the market that met security criteria for a public safety dispatch center. A dispatch supervisor is still required to review the call to ensure the accuracy of what is reported by the AI program. Comms Coach can create scenarios for training that can help improve overall performance of the call taker. Additionally, the program provides analytics to help establish how often calls have a mental health component. It can also identify if a specific dispatcher is taking a large number of difficult calls (e.g., suicide attempts, deaths, violent crime, etc.) that may require checking in with the employee about their own mental health.

Background:

The mission of MMHPI is to provide independent, nonpartisan, data-driven, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates equitable systemic changes so all people can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it. The pilot program with SBSO focuses on

improved outcomes for people with mental health emergencies that call 9-1-1. Santa Barbara County is one of three sites nationwide piloting PCTA call taking. In the fall of 2024, MMHPI contacted SBSO about becoming a site to pilot PCTA call taking. The other existing sites were in Ohio—one rural and one metropolitan area. Santa Barbara was a desirable location based on the size and overall make-up of the county. At the time, SBSO was in discussion with Behavioral Wellness to determine best practices to divert mental health response calls from law enforcement (with or without a behavioral wellness clinician) to a response from Behavioral Wellness. The pilot program includes specific questions to be asked when a caller identifies “mental health assistance” as their primary need when calling 9-1-1. Training dispatch staff and the creation of a decision tree on what the most appropriate response for the situation would be—law enforcement, a co-response (law enforcement with a clinician), or a clinician only (in person or virtually). MMHPI was approved to use the philanthropic donation they received to fund a program that will help SBSO enhance the pilot program. In discussions with MMHPI, Comms Coach by GovWorx was identified to improve and enhance operations related to mental health data at the Sheriff’s Office.

County Policy D4.1 requires that departments describe to the Board of Supervisors the source and value of each donation in excess of \$10,000, which includes this donation from MMHPI.

Performance Measure:

In exchange for the funding of Comms Coach, SBSO will provide a monthly progress report to MMPHI with the following information, easily obtained via the program analytics. These analytics will help inform program success and determine if there may be ongoing benefit associated with this coaching software.

- **Initial PCTA question fidelity:** Percentage of all 911 calls in which call-takers adhered to the initial PCTA protocol question (“*Do you need police, fire, medical, or mental health services?*”).
 - Target: 95%
- **Subsequent question fidelity:** Percentage of 911 calls identified as mental-health-related that were handled in accordance with all subsequent PCTA protocol questions.
 - Target: 95%

The analytics being collected are expected to help improve the overall reporting data within the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system since the AI can flag comments made, such as a call having mental health component without mental health being the primary reason for the call, allowing a person to tag the information so that the data can later be mined. It is anticipated we will be able to find areas to improve upon based on trends seen in the system, such as not providing safety instructions. Although a target cannot be defined without starting data, we expect to see improvements as data is identified and corrected.

Contract Renewals:

This is a one-time cash donation from MMHPI to pay for Comms Coach. The Comms Coach subscription will expire on January 20, 2027. At that time, depending on the results of the pilot, SBSO may elect to renew the program following County procurement procedures, assuming a funding source is located within the department’s existing budget. The second year is expected to cost \$39,562.50 and any additional year would have a 5% increase per year.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No, however the donation will cover 100% of the cost of the direct subscription so there will be no impact on the General Fund. Approval of Budget Revision Request #0010991 (Attachment B), attached to this board letter, is requested to utilize this funding.

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Source	FY 2025-26	Total
Donation & Grant	\$39,562.50	\$39,562.50
Total	\$39,562.50	\$39,562.50

MMHPI has approved funding a one-year subscription to Comms Coach, as a donation to SBSO. The subscription cost is \$39,562.50. Upon receiving the invoice from SBSO, MMHPI will send the Sheriff's Office the funds to pay the invoice.

At this time, long-term funding following the donation period has not been identified.

Special Instructions:

None

Attachments:

Attachment A – Santa Barbara County Sheriff (CA) Dispatch- CommsCoachQA + Comms Assist

Attachment B – Budget Revision Request #BJE-0010991

Contact Information:

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