



Committee: HHS
Committee Review: At a future date
Staff: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To introduce agenda item – no vote expected
Keywords: #crisis prevention, #hotline

AGENDA ITEM #2T
July 21, 2020
Introduction

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the County's Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget, Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Crisis Prevention, Crisis Prevention & Intervention Services-Montgomery County Hotline, \$395,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant and General Fund Reserves) and Amendment to Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Resolution 19-472, Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: EveryMind

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Introduction. The HHS Committee review is scheduled for July 23. Public hearing and action are scheduled for July 28, 2020.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The COVID-19 public health crisis and restrictions intended to slow the spread of disease have placed stress on individuals and families. Because of these restrictions, many county residents have been challenged with unemployment or significantly reduced work and income and difficulty meeting basic needs, such as food and housing. Having families in close quarters has exacerbated family tensions and feelings of alienation and isolation. Consequently, mental health supports are in great demand by County residents struggling with COVID-19 related challenges.

EveryMind's Montgomery County hotline, which provides supportive listening, information and resource referrals, and crisis intervention (including suicide assessments) through telephone, text, and chat services, has supported County residents expressing increased stress and anxiety due to the virus as well as significant loneliness and isolation as a result of the need to quarantine and social distance. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, EveryMind has experienced a 25% increase in call volume, which has remained steady through June. Funding to support a higher level of service from EveryMind's Montgomery County Hotline is needed for individuals in crisis.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The source of funding for the special appropriation is \$300,000 in Federal Grant Funding and \$95,000 in General Fund Reserves.
- This special appropriation will support the addition of 8 full-time equivalents of specialists to staff the Hotline, along with supervisory, managerial, and administrative support for these positions,

through December 2020. The additional positions are needed to address the increased calls due to the COVID-19 emergency and maintain the number of hotline shifts per week and double staffing coverage provided in FY20 in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

- The funding will also support the expansion of text services from 8 am to noon through FY21. These services are particularly important to support youth in crisis.
- The resolution also amends Resolution 19-128, Section G, FY20 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Award Status to add funding to the contract with EveryMind with the purpose to “provide confidential, supportive mental health hotline for County residents and a youth suicide prevention hotline.”

This report contains:

Proposed Resolution

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: Council Council

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
Behavioral Health and Crisis Prevention
Crisis Prevention & Intervention Services-Montgomery County Hotline
\$395,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant and General Fund Reserves) and
Amendment to Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Resolution 19-472
Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive
Contract Award Status: EveryMind

Background

1. Section 308 of the County Charter provides that a special appropriation is an appropriation which states that it is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency, or to act without delay in the public interest. Each special appropriation shall be approved by not less than six Councilmembers. The Council may approve a special appropriation at any time after public notice by news release. Each special appropriation shall specify the source of funds to finance it.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic, and it has spread rapidly throughout the world. As of July 14, 2020, there were 15,883 confirmed cases in Montgomery County. There were 724 confirmed deaths and 38 probable deaths in Montgomery County. To slow the spread of the disease, Maryland Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency on March 5, 2020 and issued Executive Orders that closed schools, closed non-essential business, and required Maryland residents to shelter at home. Restrictions intended to slow the spread of disease have placed stress on individuals and families.
3. Because of these restrictions, many county residents have been challenged with unemployment or significantly reduced work and income and difficulty meeting basic needs, such as food and housing. Since the beginning of March, Montgomery County residents have filed over 87,000 initial unemployment claims.

4. Having families in close quarters has exacerbated family tensions and feelings of alienation and isolation. Since the COVID-19 restrictions went into effect, the County has experienced an increase not only in the number of domestic violence cases but also in their severity. The recent suicide deaths of three Montgomery County youth underscore the tremendous difficulties that youth are facing under these challenging circumstances.
5. Mental health supports are in great demand by County residents struggling with COVID-19 related challenges. EveryMind's Montgomery County hotline, which provides supportive listening, information and resource referrals, and crisis intervention (including suicide assessments) through telephone, text, and chat services, has supported County residents expressing increased stress and anxiety due to the virus as well as significant loneliness and isolation as a result of the need to quarantine and social distance. Hotline participants include older adults living in facilities that are unable to have visitors and youth who are stuck at home in abusive situations or feeling alienated from family and friends. Youth primarily access the text/chat services offered by the hotline; however, text services are limited to the hours of noon to midnight and 33% of missed text are received between the hours of 8:00 am and noon.
6. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, EveryMind has experienced a 25% increase in call volume, which has remained steady through June. In response to the increase in call volume, EveryMind increased technology and phone equipment to transition operations to remote work, following CDC and Montgomery County public health and safety requirements and guidelines. From mid-March through June, Every Mind was able to provide double staffing during most daytime shifts for calls, texts and chats due to a one-time funding increase from Montgomery County Public Schools for FY20. As a result of this double staffing, EveryMind saw the hotline call answer rate increase to 83% from around 60% pre-COVID-19. The hotline also saw a 58% decrease in missed calls.
7. Funding to support a higher level of service from EveryMind's Montgomery County Hotline is needed for individuals in crisis. This special appropriation will support the addition of 8 full-time equivalents of specialists to staff the Hotline, along with supervisory, managerial, and administrative support for these positions, through December 2020. The additional positions are needed to address the increased calls due to the COVID-19 emergency and maintain the number of hotline shifts per week and double staffing coverage provided in FY20 in response to the COVID-19 emergency. In addition, the funding will also support the expansion of text services from 8 am to noon through FY21.
8. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

Action

A special appropriation to the FY21 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Crisis Services, in the amount of \$395,000 is approved as follows:

<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>Source TOTALof Funds</u>
\$0	\$300,000 \$ 95,000	\$0	Federal Grant General Fund Reserves

The funding appropriated in this resolution must be added to a noncompetitive agreement with EveryMind and only used to deliver the expanded Montgomery County hotline services described in paragraph 7.

This resolution amends Resolution 19-128, Section G, FY20 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Award Status to add funding to the contract with EveryMind with the purpose to “provide confidential, supportive mental health hotline for County residents and a youth suicide prevention hotline” in the amount of \$395,000.

This appropriation is needed to address a public health emergency and to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council