



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony/final action - vote expected
Keywords: #crisis prevention, #hotline

AGENDA ITEM #13
December 14, 2021
Public Hearing/Action

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the County's Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget, Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Crisis Prevention, Crisis Prevention & Intervention Services-Montgomery County Hotline, \$350,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) and Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget Resolution 19-872, Section G, FY22 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: EveryMind

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- This special appropriation was introduced on November 30, 2021.
- There is no committee recommendation. A motion is required.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Mental health supports have been in great demand by County residents struggling with COVID-19 related challenges. EveryMind's Montgomery County Hotline (Hotline) has provided an increased level of supportive listening, information and resource referrals, crisis intervention services, telephone, text, and chat services to meet the demand of County residents. Additional funding is needed to maintain the current level of staffing and services through the end of the fiscal year. In addition, this funding will also help the program in the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 9-8-8, which is expected to triple the program's call volume.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- In Fiscal Year 2022, the Council appropriated increased funding of \$350,000 to the DHHS base budget to support expanded Hotline services that were previously supported with federal CARES Act and one-time private funds through December 2021.
- The higher level of staffing supported by this funding addressed the increase in call volume experienced by the Hotline during the pandemic and provided for additional hours for text and chat services. This funding allowed EveryMind to field a 33% increase in the number of calls answered from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021.

- For Fiscal Year 2022, the Council provided partial year funding to DHHS and EveryMind to determine the appropriate level of the service and funding needed for the Hotline in the context of improvements to the County’s crisis response system, and other changes to crisis call services at the state and national levels. Thus, the Council anticipated coming back mid-year to make an additional appropriation to support Hotline services through the second half of Fiscal Year 2022.
- This appropriation is needed to provide supportive listening, information and resource referrals, and crisis intervention to individuals in crisis. It will allow EveryMind to maintain the current level of services through the second half of Fiscal Year 2022 and to prepare for the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 9-8-8, which change is expected to triple the call/contact volume. Without this funding, Hotline would need to reduce staffing to pre-pandemic levels, which would result in a corresponding reduction in the program’s answer rate.
- The resolution also amends Resolution 19-872, Section G, FY22 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

© 1-3

Council Sponsored Special Appropriation: Racial Equity and Social Justice

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: November 30, 2021
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsors: Council President Albornoz and Councilmembers Friedson and Jawando

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
Behavioral Health and Crisis Prevention
Crisis Prevention & Intervention Services-Montgomery County Hotline
\$350,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) and
Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget Resolution 19-872
Section G, FY22 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 November 22, 2021, there were 84,443 confirmed cases in Montgomery County. There were 1,678 confirmed deaths and 52 probable deaths in Montgomery County.
3. Since the State of Emergency was declared in Maryland on March 5, 2020, there have been various restrictions imposed to slow transmission of the disease including closing schools and non-essential businesses; masking, distancing, and limiting congregation in indoor spaces; and vaccination and testing requirements. Because of these restrictions, many county residents have been challenged with unemployment or significantly reduced work and income, difficulty meeting basic needs such as food and housing, increased family tensions, and feelings of alienation and isolation. Consequently, mental health supports have been in great demand by County residents struggling with COVID-19 related challenges.

4. EveryMind's Montgomery County Hotline (Hotline) provides supportive listening, information and resource referrals, and crisis intervention (including suicide assessments) through telephone, text, and chat services, and 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.
5. The Council appropriated \$395,000 in federal CARES Act and local County funding on July 28, 2020, to address increased call volume experienced by the Hotline during the pandemic and add additional hours for text and chat services. The funding supported increased staffing and higher level of service through December 2020. After the calendar year ended, EveryMind pieced together one-time contributions and grants to continue the higher level of service through the end of Fiscal Year 2021. This funding allowed EveryMind to double-staff the Hotline during the busiest shifts and resulted in a 33% increase in the number of calls answered from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021.
6. Because EveryMind was not able to sustain private funding levels from Fiscal Year 2021 into Fiscal Year 2022, the Council appropriated \$350,000 to support the program. The funding was intended to support services through December 2021 to provide the opportunity to determine the appropriate level of the service and funding needed for the Hotline in the context of improvements to the County's crisis response system, and other changes to crisis call services at the state and national levels.
7. The EveryMind Hotline answers the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which will transition to 9-8-8 on July 16, 2022 and is an integral part of the crisis response continuum. More than 90% of contacts to the Hotline are resolved without the need for Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, Crisis Center, Fire and Rescue, or Police intervention. The Hotline also receives calls transferred from non-emergency police lines. With the change to 9-8-8, EveryMind anticipates a three-fold increase in the volume of contacts.
8. Funding to maintain a higher level of service from EveryMind's Montgomery County Hotline is needed for individuals in crisis. This appropriation is needed to maintain the current level of services through the second half of Fiscal Year 2022 and to prepare for the transition to 9-8-8. Without this funding, Hotline would need to reduce staffing to pre-pandemic levels, which would result in a corresponding reduction in the program's call answer rate.
9. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

Action

A special appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Crisis Services, in the amount of \$350,000 is approved as follows:

Personnel Expense	Operating Expense	Capital Outlay	TOTAL	Source of Funds
\$0	\$350,000	\$0	\$350,000	General Fund Reserves

The funding appropriated in this resolution must be added to a noncompetitive agreement with EveryMind to maintain Montgomery Count Hotline staffing and services at current levels and prepare for the transition to 9-8-8.

This resolution amends Resolution 19-872, Section G, FY21 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 \$350,000.

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

Council Sponsored Special Appropriation: Racial Equity and Social Justice

SUBJECT:

Special Appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget
**Department of Health and Human Services, Crisis Prevention & Intervention Services –
Montgomery County Hotline**

\$350,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

Lead Sponsors: Council Vice President Albornoz and Councilmembers Friedson and Jawando

Introduced on November 30, 2021; Public Hearing and Action scheduled for December 14, 2021

Description and Background

The special appropriation will support a higher level of staffing implemented by the Hotline to address increased call volume during the pandemic and support the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Line to 9-8-8 in 2022.

This Hotline provides supportive listening, information and resource referrals, and crisis intervention to individuals in crisis through phone calls and text and chat services. Due to the increased call volume and decreased program capacity during the pandemic the Council appropriated funding to support staffing during the busiest Hotline shifts and additional coverage for text and chat services. This funding allowed EveryMind to field a 33% increase in the number of calls answered from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021.

Maintaining the increased level of staffing is especially needed as the program prepares for the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 9-8-8, which change is expected to triple the call/contact volume.

Data

Montgomery County Suicide-Related Demographics

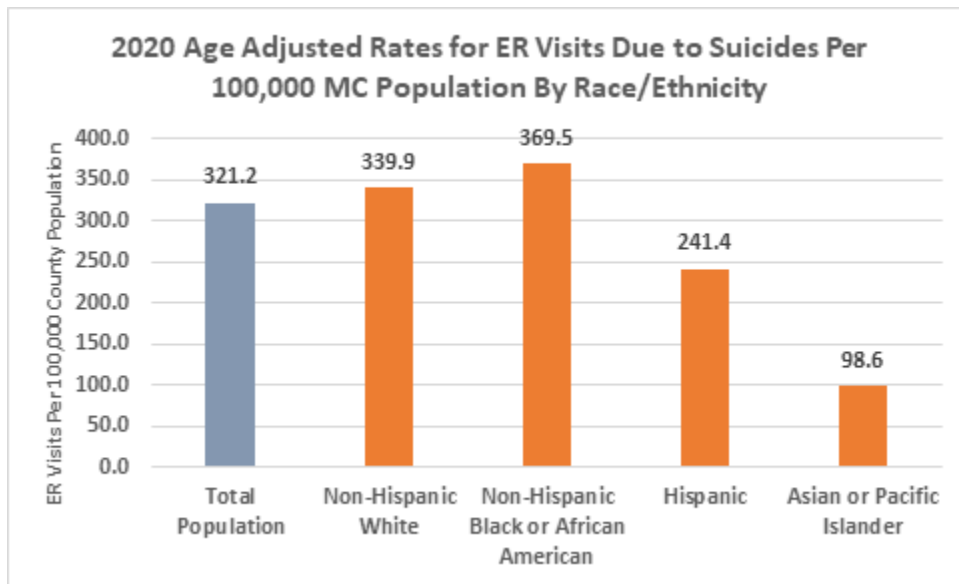
In 2020, there were 78 suicide deaths in Montgomery County. The following table shows the demographic characteristics associated with these deaths:

2020 Montgomery County Suicide Deaths

	Number	%
Age		
0-24	10	12.8
25-64	51	65.4
65+	15	19.2
Unknown	2	2.6
Gender		
Female	16	10.5

	Male	62	79.5
	Other	0	0
Race/Ethnicity			
	White	49	62.8
	African American	9	11.5
	Other	20	25.6

The next table shows the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population for Emergency Room visits due to suicide broken out by race/ethnicity.



Hotline Demographics and Practices

The following table reports the contacts to the Hotline by race and ethnicity and fiscal year:

	FY20 # contacts/ % of total	FY21 # contacts/ % of total	FY22 1st Q # contacts/ % of total
Undisclosed	11,828/51.0%	23,280/76.6%	5,958/75.5%
White/Non-Hispanic	6,161/26.6%	3,498/11.5%	666/8.4%
Black/African-American	3,211/13.9%	2268/7.5%	760/9.6%
Hispanic/Latin X	617/2.7%	297/1.0%	97/1.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	877/3.8%	753/2.5%	275/3.5%
Bi-racial	484/2.1%	288/0.9%	136/1.7%
Total	23,178	30,384	7892

Lifeline provides tailored support to Spanish speakers and veterans, though the number of callers from this region choosing these options is not yet available. Hotline does not currently have any non-English language supports; however, callers needing language support services coming into the EveryMind hotline directly are provided a warm transfer to the Crisis Center. This fiscal year, the Hotline has transferred 86 calls to the Crisis Center so far, but data is not available to determine if this transfer was due to crisis level or language needs.

The racial/ethnic breakout of Hotline staff is provided in the following table:

Hotline Staff	#	%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15	21.7
Black/African- American	2	2.8
White/Non-Hispanic	47	68.1
Hispanic/Latinx	5	7.2
Total	69	99.8

Despite current challenges in recruiting Hotline staff, especially those from diverse backgrounds with other language capabilities, EveryMind administrators have noted that the increase in public funding has allowed the program to diversify its staff with less reliance on a less diverse volunteer staff.

EveryMind has provided the following description of its policies and practices related to racial equity and social justice:

As part of our accreditation requirements and our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), our hotline training includes a one-hour webinar as well as coursework on cultural competence. We also provide 1 – 2 trainings per year to all hotline staff around diversity, to strengthen their abilities to support and serve diverse communities. Recent training topics have included “Race & Mental Health: Preventing Suicidal Behavior in Latina Adolescents in a Culturally Competent Manner,” “Missing Matters: Suicide Loss in our African American and Black Communities,” “Racism and Mental Health: Becoming a Cultural Ally,” and “Preventing Suicide Among Military and Veterans.”

Furthermore, EveryMind has engaged in a multi-year partnership with The Nebo Company, focusing on our DEI commitment including leadership development (from front line staff through the Board of Directors), as well as organizational culture work around DEI during the first year of our partnership. EveryMind is continuing to work with The Nebo Company, supporting our efforts to create a DEI Council for the organization, which will launch in January 2022. The DEI Council will provide a dedicated focus on our DEI priorities, make recommendations that will drive organization change, and evaluate DEI initiatives to ensure we are reaching our goals. EveryMind is already strategizing and implementing recruitment efforts to bring a more diverse

pool of candidates for open positions, such as including salary ranges in job postings, and posting positions on sites that reach diverse audiences including Indeed, ZipRecruiter, university and college career centers and job boards including HBCUs. We will continue to strengthen and expand our DEI efforts through our DEI Council.

In addition, EveryMind is committed to addressing inequities in access to mental health and wellness resources across all of our programs. EveryMind offers Mental Health First Aid certification training in English as well as Spanish, which includes information on how and when to use the Hotline. We offer additional trainings on mental health and wellness through nearly every program within the organization, which includes information on accessing the Hotline in English and Spanish. Recently, EveryMind was awarded funding through the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) to create mental health educational videos in 5 commonly spoken Asian languages within the county to combat the stigma around mental health in these communities and to provide training on how and when to access mental health resources in the county such as Hotline. We continue to promote access through targeted partnerships with the Latino Health Initiative, AAHI, American Diversity Group, and many more county nonprofits that address inequities in the healthcare system. In this way, we are ensuring that Montgomery County residents are able to access the Hotline resource no matter the language or community with which they identify.

Council Staff Comments

There is a need for crisis prevention across all racial and ethnic groups as evidenced by the numbers of suicide deaths and emergency room visits related to suicide. The crisis services that the Everymind Hotline provides, by its nature, is needed by individuals in crisis. However, it is unclear from the data the extent to which members of various racial and ethnic groups are using hotline services, as the majority of callers do not disclose their affiliated group. Moreover, information on income levels is not collected by the hotline, so the extent to which the program is serving low-income clients is also unknown.

The Hotline and EveryMind have taken measures to improve cultural competency, recruiting a more diverse workforce, and improve access to mental health and wellness of diverse communities in the County.

Written by: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst