



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

February 6, 2024

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director,
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Special Appropriations (SA) #24-17
Department of Health and Human Services Behavioral Health and Crisis Service's
Trauma Services, \$500,000 (Source of Funds: State Grant)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Supplemental Appropriation #24-17 Department of Health and Human Services Behavioral Health and Crisis Service's Trauma Services, \$500,000* will improve health and safety outcomes for beneficiaries from communities of color that receive access to available trauma services.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS" or "Department") has requested an additional \$500,000 to the FY24 Operating Budget.¹ This request is funded through a state grant and will help maintain Trauma Services currently housed within the Department.² The breakdown of the increase is as follows:
- \$44,738 to increase a part-time staff position to a full-time equivalency (FTE) to enhance service delivery.
 - \$328,037 for operating expenses to increase contractual staff for trauma services.
 - \$89,502 to expand the scope of work with the Baltimore Therapy Center to serve more clients.

¹ [Office of Management and Budget Memorandum](#), "Supplemental Appropriation #24-17 to the FY24 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services. August 21, 2023.

² [State grant award packet](#), from Gary Richardson, Director, Grants Administration, July 27, 2023.

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- \$37,723 for purchasing a new curriculum for Abuse Intervention Group Counseling, basic client needs, transportation for treatment and court, training for domestic violence staff, and other indirect costs.

III. ANALYSIS: Within DHHS, Trauma Services offers targeted support to victims of crime and traumatic events.³ The program offers counseling, crisis intervention, legal assistance, and other support services. It ensures that survivors have the resources to navigate their recovery and engage with the justice system effectively.

Services cater to their immediate and long-term needs, including crisis intervention, counseling, and legal assistance, to help their recovery and ensure their safety and well-being. Through the program, domestic violence victims in the area receive access to resources to escape harmful environments and rebuild their lives. Support includes emergency shelter, legal advocacy, counseling, addressing the immediate danger and the underlying trauma, and empowering individuals towards independence and healing.

The Need for Trauma Services in Montgomery County

Montgomery County, Maryland, is a diverse population that experiences victimization across all racial and ethnic backgrounds. In FY22, the Trauma Services program supported a wide demographic, with most services used by individuals from communities of color. In FY22, 77% of sexual assault survivors, 63% of general crime victims, 68% of intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors, and 78% of IPV offenders utilizing the program identified as part of a community of color.⁴

Research shows that women of color are at greater risk of experiencing rape.⁵ One source predicted that “thirty-four percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women, twenty-four percent of women that identify with two or more races, and nineteen percent of Black women will be raped during their lifetimes, in comparison to eighteen percent of white women and seven percent of Asian/Pacific Islander women.”⁶

³ ORESJ employs a best practice also used by the DC Council Office of Racial Equity in using the terms “victim” and “victims” consistently throughout this REIA as to align with the language of the proposed supplemental appropriation. This REIA also acknowledges that not all victims of crime may choose to identify as such. And as resources have noted, “Depending on an individual’s lived experience and preference, some people choose to identify not with victimhood—but with survivorship—to reclaim their own agency and power when those have been taken from them.” For best practices see the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative and RTI International. [“Victim or Survivor: Terminology from Investigation Through Prosecution.”](#) Sexual Assault Kit Initiative; Also see CORE’s Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Bill 25-0348, [the “Ensuring Safe Forensic Evidence Handling For Sexual Assault Survivors Amendment Act of 2023.”](#) November 9, 2023.

⁴ These statistics were provided along with the information that accompanied this request from the Department. For more information see completed [RESJ Toolkit](#)

⁵ National Alliance to End Sexual Violence. “Racism and Rape.” Where We Stand.

⁶ ORESJ recognizes that not all victims of sexual assault are women. The language here stays consistent with the cited reference.

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National data also shows that Black women and girls are disproportionately victims of interpersonal violence and sexual abuse.⁷ Further, Black and Indigenous persons are disproportionately victims of violent crime. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics National Crime Victimization Survey, for every 1,000 Indigenous people and people of two or more races (12 years or older), about 45 were victims of violent crime.” The source went on to note, “For every 1,000 Black people, 19 were victims of violent crime. In comparison, for every 1,000 people overall, 16.5 were victims.”⁸

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) victims receive support through specialized programs that recognize the complexities of violence within close relationships. Services aim to ensure safety, provide emotional support, and assist in navigating the legal system.

Positively, hiring full-time and additional support staff to provide trauma services to survivors of violent crimes will help ensure the range of services can continue uninterrupted. Considering that Black and Indigenous persons are disproportionately more likely to experience a violent crime, ensuring access to trauma services will likely help this demographic and help prevent the growth of racially disparate incidences of violent crime.

Concerningly, the engagement of a Baltimore-based Firm raises questions about local and Black-owned small business participation and targeted outreach to the local Montgomery County community. This practice risks sidelining local and minority-owned businesses, crucial for fostering community economic growth and cultural diversity. Local engagement and transparent procurement processes are essential to ensure fairness and inclusivity, allowing businesses within Montgomery County an equal opportunity to contribute and benefit from local government contracts.

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice has previously written about selecting service providers and the need for improved transparency regarding organizations receiving funds from the County. For example:

- Racial Equity Impact Assessment Supplemental Appropriation #24-2, FY24 Operating Budget of Montgomery County Government. July 14, 2023. Available at: [24-2.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

⁷ Susan Green, “Violence Against Black Women – Many Types, Far-Reaching Effects.” IWPR, July 13, 2017. Black trans women and non-binary people also disproportionately experience sexual abuse and interpersonal violence, see James, S.E., Brown, C., & Wilson, I., “2015 US Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of Black Respondents.” National Center for Transgender Equality, Black Trans Advocacy, & National Black Justice Coalition, 2017.

⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Violent Victimization.” NCVS Dashboard, March 7, 2023; Also see the DC Council Office of Racial Equity Racial Equity Impact Assessment on Bill 25-0051 on the District of Columbia Crime Victimization Survey Amendment Act of 2023.” September 26, 2023.

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Positively, the stated services to be provided by the Baltimore Therapy Center (BTC) would likely positively impact health and safety outcomes. BTC is a community-focused organization providing counseling and therapeutic services to individuals and families in the Baltimore area. BTC aims to support those struggling with emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues by offering a wide range of services that cater to diverse needs.

Their services include individual therapy, family counseling, group sessions, and specialized programs for domestic violence offenders. Through these service offerings, the BTC aims to foster healing, provide coping strategies, and promote mental well-being.

Notably, the supplemental appropriation takes a Race-Neutral Funding Approach. To be clear, any resident experiencing a violent crime deserves and should have access to trauma and support services. At the same time, given available data that suggests communities of color are more likely to experience violent crimes, the supplemental appropriation does not take any considerations to targeted outreach to communities of color. A race-neutral approach to funding may not effectively address the specific challenges and needs faced by communities of color in Montgomery County, who are more likely to experience domestic violence or are disproportionately impacted by various forms of violence. Targeted interventions that acknowledge and address these communities' unique experiences and barriers are crucial for delivering racially equitable services.

This analysis lacks sufficient data to determine whether the additional funding made available through the supplemental would be sufficient to address any increases in acts of violent crime. The current funding levels, while essential for sustaining existing services, may not be adequate to respond to the evolving and increasing needs of the community, especially in areas with higher rates of violence. Transitioning towards a model emphasizing more permanent staffing over contractual employees could improve the services' consistency, quality, and effectiveness.⁹

Concerningly, it is unclear how the supplemental will be implemented if approved. For example, the information that accompanied this request states roughly \$327,700 will be used for contractual staff. However, no breakdown shows exactly how many staff members this will hire. In another instance, funds will be used to support a "state-sponsored curriculum." However, little details are shared about that curriculum, whether it is culturally responsive or, since it is new—if it has any demonstrable successes.

⁹ See Memo.

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Notably, the proposed breakdown of funds also provides the lowest amount that can likely be spent directly with victims. As proposed, the supplemental provides \$37,000 “for basic needs items for clients, transportation for treatment and court, training for domestic violence staff, and other indirect costs.” While it is unclear what “other indirect costs” are, the other stated uses, such as providing transportation from treatment and providing resources to buy basic needs items for clients who may be experiencing a crisis, can go a long way in removing barriers to access, safety, and healthy outcomes.

cc: Dr. James Bridgers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive