

Written Comments for
Regular Public Comment Section
- **Consent Agenda**
- **Non Agenda Items**

From: [Pat Willard](#)
To: [CMO BoardFeedback](#)
Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Response pilot program
Date: Sunday, January 23, 2022 3:14:22 PM
Attachments: [SCRT IWG Issue Brief FINAL.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Members of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors,

The December 2, 2021 news release by the County of San Mateo announcing the launch of the Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project contains a description of the operation of this model:

“Once officers declare the scene safe, clinicians will assess the individual and determine the best methods of immediate care.”

In other words, when someone calls 911 about a mental health crisis situation and says that the individual has no weapon, is not violent, isn't threatening anyone, and has no criminal record, police officers will still respond. It doesn't matter whether it's an adult or a 6-year old child. The bottom line is the mental health issues are treated like a crime.

Included here is an excerpt from Redwood City's Community Satisfaction Survey of December 2021. What you see is a strong preference for non-law enforcement responses to mental health issues (as well as homelessness, which is often related).

41INT. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

SCALE:	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	(Don't know)	Total Agree	Total Disagree
41. I would feel comfortable calling the police in an emergency							
Dec '21	65	23	6	6	-	87	13
42. Civilian workers should respond to emergency calls involving homelessness and mental health							
Dec '21	41	34	13	11	2	75	23

Also attached is a description of San Francisco's Street Crisis Response Team.

I am calling upon you to bring an end to the police with embedded clinician Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project. In its place, call for and fund the implementation of a program in Redwood City, Daly City, South San Francisco and San Mateo akin in every way to the San Francisco program which does not involve law enforcement. Invite representatives of the San Francisco Street Crisis Response team to tell you how they do it.

Cordially,

/ Pat Willard

Resident of San Mateo County for Decades

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Rebecca Kieler <beccakieler12@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 13, 2022 3:41 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am writing in regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. This program criminalized mental health crises.

I have a friend who has an adult son with schizophrenia. She lives in fear of him being in contact with the police. She spends much of her time trying to make sure he is OK. Trying to find and keep a case manager to help her support him. And in between time she is with him which is at a minimum of once a week, she is in fear that he will get upset and wander out and meet up the police or sheriff.

As the daughter of a former police officer, and the sister of a former sheriff officer and the cousin of a former CHP officer, I know full well this is not an area they are experts in. My father would say, 'why the heck are we supposed to handle this kind of problem? This is not our area.' It did not use to be...let's right this situation!

Let's put this important responsibility back where it belongs. In the hands of trained medical professionals and let the police and sheriff get back to what they are trained in.

Please be a dissenting voice regarding the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program.
Please be a champion for the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team model.

Rebecca Kieler
NO. Fair Oaks, Redwood City

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Michele Beasley <beasleymichele@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 8:12 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to the San Mateo Co. Board of Supervisors

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Dear San Mateo County Board of Supervisors,

My name is Michele Beasley, I am a member of [SURJ- San Mateo](#) and live in Redwood City. In regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program, I believe it still criminalizes mental health crises. We call on the police to do too much in the community and they are not trained to deal with all issues. As a result, situations that don't need to escalate will do so. Police should not be first responders in mental health crises.

Police protocols can escalate a situation quickly. For example, a blaring police car siren staying on during a mental health crisis call – this alarming sound is not going to calm someone down, it will do the opposite. When someone calls 911, they should have an option for a trained mental health professional to respond to a mental health crisis, not the police. We can learn from the [San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team](#) which offers an alternative to law enforcement. It is absolutely stunning to me that in 2022, when someone is having a mental health issue, we send in the police.

We can do better and I hope we can learn from neighboring jurisdictions and listen to community feedback and mental health professionals on how to address this important issue. Thank you for reading my comment.

Michele Beasley

Links in the message (1)



Racial Justice | SURJ San Mateo

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Debra Leschyn <dleschyn@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 8:08 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: In Regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team Pilot Program

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

In regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team Pilot Program, I have several concerns. I believe that the model that the BOS has adopted continues to utilize police as first responders to mental health and behavioral health issues. The program criminalizes people who are experiencing a mental health crisis. With having a clinician as a co-respondent does not mitigate the situation sufficiently. Many people in crisis have had negative experiences with law enforcement, especially marginalized groups and people of color.

Police already have enough to do without taking care of mental health crises and other non-violent behaviors such as substance abuse or low-level issues. Free the police up to do what they do well which is to fight crime. Additionally, cities and counties can avoid lawsuits related to excessive use of force by having the right response rather than one response to all calls.

Please reconsider this model and please take a look at the San Francisco Street Crisis Team Model which utilizes an EMT and a crisis worker as first responders for mental health and behavioral/substance abuse calls. This is so much more appropriate. This is the direction we should be moving in because it makes sense and it works.

This model is being adopted by many cities with excellent results so far. I would like to see you be a true advocate for people who have a mental illness or another behavioral issue that puts them at risk. As a parent of a child that has been in a mental health crisis in the past, I am aware that a compassionate well-trained crisis worker and an EMT would be much more desirable as a 911 call option.

Thank you for your service to the community and I hope you will reexamine your program and look for a better outcome.

Sincerely,

Debra Leschyn
SURJ San Mateo
Belmont Neighbors Against Racism
Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Nancy Goodban <nancy.goodban@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:47 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Please consider a CAHOOTS type model

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I am concerned about the new pilot model where an armed officer goes with a crisis counselor to a mental health call. That continues to criminalize the metal health crisis.

Please consider a CAHOOTS type model where the call is triaged at the front end - 911 can go to police, fire, or mental health, with mental health staff in the room to help determine the most appropriate response. Mental health calls are diverted to a team with a crisis counselor and an EMT. I understand they divert about 20% of calls (among those, abut 5% go for additional backup from an officer) and with few problems over the past 30 years. It is a tried and true model and allows police to do the job they were trained for.

I am attending a SURJ San Mateo meeting tonight where this is being discussed - when an armed officer shows up it is so alarming for people in crisis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy

Nancy Goodban, PhD
319 Iris St
Redwood City, CA 94062

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Vail Weller <vailweller@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:47 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you this evening as a concerned citizen, a minister, a mother, and a member of SURJ San Mateo. I am motivated to contact you specifically regarding the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. I believe that this program criminalizes mental health issues. It may sound to those who aren't learning more about the program as though it is an improvement, but I am deeply concerned about the police's involvement.

I want to ask you to champion the **San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team Model** - I believe this approach deserves more attention and support. I have a concern that police are already doing too much, and we want mental health crises to be handled by mental health professionals rather than law enforcement officers. In other cities, mental health professionals and crisis experts are part of the sorting group when a call to 911 comes in - they know how to sort the issues as they come in to make sure that the right people. I want to advocate for police to be available to fight crime. Mental health struggles are not a crime and should not be treated as such.

I heard a first-hand account from a mother of a 14 year old who was in mental health distress, and the mother called the police for help. When they arrived, with sirens blaring, they said that policy required sirens to be left blaring, and when the mother left the room to inform the other children in the house why the police were there, she returned to find her son in handcuffs. He was taken from the house in handcuffs in the back of a police car to the ER for mental health care. His mother was not able to see him for 4 hours. As a mother of a child who has struggled with mental health issues, I am mortified to hear this story. These actions are in no way helpful to any person in the midst of a mental health struggle.

I ask that you be a dissenting voice on the matter of the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. I ask that police be decoupled from mental health crises. This will make our communities more safe.

I appreciate your work on behalf of all of us, because I know that you care about our community.

Sincerely,

Rev. Vail Weller
San Mateo, CA
650-678-9566 phone

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Emily Morris <emilys.morris21@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:45 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Re: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

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To add: I oppose the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program and I'm asking you to oppose it too, and instead support non-police responses, which have been modeled by other pilot programs.

On Tue, Jan 11, 2022 at 7:43 PM Emily Morris <emilys.morris21@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi,

I'm writing in response to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. As a San Mateo resident, I have serious concerns about police being involved in mental health in San Mateo County. Police escalate situations as a matter of policy and are not trained for mental health response.

Please consider embracing a response similar to [Mental Health First Oakland](#), which is a community response that does not involve police. I would gladly support a county-service that provides mental health support that does not involve 911 and that would have zero interaction with police. Police have no place, at all whatsoever, in mental health response.

Thank you,
Emily

--

Emily Morris
630-346-4936

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Jacki Rigoni <jacki@womanuprising.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:45 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Opposition to Community Wellness and Crisis Team Pilot

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Dear Honorable Board of Supervisors,

I am voicing my opposition to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. In my direct, personal experience, police are inappropriate first responders in many mental health emergencies.

My name is Jacki Rigoni, an educator, mother of three, and resident of San Mateo County for 20 years. I'm also the Poet Laureate Emerita of Belmont, and a member of Belmont Neighbors Against Racism.

My son and I personally experienced the trauma of an inappropriate mental health response by police. I called 911 in 2020 when my 14 year old son was in distress. He is a normal kid, an A student, and the pressure of shelter in place and school work had pushed him too far, like it has done for many of us.

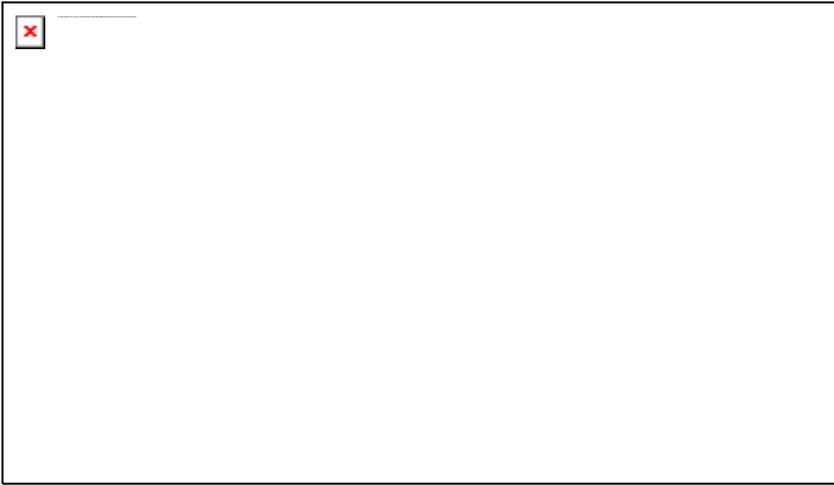
To make a long story short, my 911 call for help in a mental health issue resulted in my small, non-violent son being transported to the emergency room in handcuffs.

I believe a properly trained mental health professional without police would have resulted in a completely different outcome. I thought I was calling for support. Instead, my son was treated like a criminal. The experience traumatized both of us even more. I can tell you right now, if one of my three teenagers is ever in distress again, the last thing I'll do is call 911.

So while I do support this mental health program, I adamantly disagree with it being under the auspices of the police. Police presence only escalates mental health situations, as we saw in the case of Chinedu Okobi who was tased to death after jaywalking at the hands of San Mateo County deputies. There are many effective models for mental health programs, such as CAHOOTS in Eugene, Oregon and the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team, where mental health professionals are actually the first responders to mental health calls. Fire departments and paramedics respond to emergencies every single day without police presence.

Thank you,
Jacki Rigoni

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Sukhmani Purewal

From: Beth von Emster <beth.vonemster@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:44 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

In regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program that has been approved for the largest four cities in our county, I would ask that the Board of Supervisors reconsider the program's involvement of police in responding to mental health incidents.

As has been demonstrated in San Francisco's Street Crisis Team model, and an increasing number of jurisdictions, mental health incidents can be effectively resolved by deploying mental health specialists without involving law enforcement.

My family has personal experience with the trauma inflicted when police respond to a teenager experiencing a mental health incident. Despite the best efforts of officers, the response of armed law enforcement criminalizes the person in crisis and dramatically worsens their mental state.

I hope that the Board will consider championing San Francisco's model, removing law enforcement from responses to mental health episodes in San Mateo County, and instead deploying mental health professionals in those situations.

Sincerely,
Beth von Emster, Belmont Resident

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Michyle LaPedis <michyle@lapedis.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:44 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Team Pilot program

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

In regard to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team Pilot program, I am very concerned that the program raises the risk to both San Mateo County citizens and to our county's budget from the inappropriate criminalization of mental health crises.

The police should NOT be the first contact for mental health crises. There are very successful models in California and elsewhere where mental health calls are evaluated and properly directed to mental health professionals. They are the one who are proven to be able to deescalate and resolve without police involvement. Police bring guns, sirens, handcuffs and approaches that are shown time and again to lead to tragedy for people in mental health crises.

I am asking that San Mateo County revise its pilot to more closely model the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team and MH First Oakland, which are both run without police as the first contact. The same can be said for multiple programs around the country – San Mateo County is going down the wrong path with having police as the initial contact.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this crucial issue.

Michyle LaPedis

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Cathy Baird <cathy_baird@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:44 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Supervisors:

I am writing to you about the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. I am concerned that the program criminalizes mental health crises by asking law enforcement to decide whether a mental health clinician needs to be involved. With the police arriving first, it still asks police to deal with a mental health crisis before a clinician is present. This far too often results in unnecessary trauma and damage to all involved.

A better model would allow the 911 operator to be able to connect to police, fire, or mental health responders. If the person in crisis is not a danger to themselves or others, an EMT and a mental health clinician can respond to the call for help. This is the model used by the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team and is based on some of the long experience with CAHOOTS in Oregon.

Please don't ask law enforcement to do everything. Give them time to focus on crime, which is supposed to be their main purpose.

Please change the model of the pilot program to one more like the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team and the CAHOOTS model.

Thank you.

Cathy Baird
Member of SURJ San Mateo
San Carlos

Sukhmani Purewal

From: RICHARD MULLER <richard_muller@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:43 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program

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I believe there should be at least three response options to 911 calls.
Fire, police, and mental health responders such as they have in San Francisco.
I'm associated with the San Mateo SURJ, Stand Up for Racial Justice group.

Thank You,

Richard Muller

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Emily Morris <emilys.morris21@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:43 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Hi,

I'm writing in response to the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. As a San Mateo resident, I have serious concerns about police being involved in mental health in San Mateo County. Police escalate situations as a matter of policy and are not trained for mental health response.

Please consider embracing a response similar to [Mental Health First Oakland](#), which is a community response that does not involve police. I would gladly support a county-service that provides mental health support that does not involve 911 and that would have zero interaction with police. Police have no place, at all whatsoever, in mental health response.

Thank you,
Emily

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Ann Myers <akdmyers@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:42 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program

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Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am a ten-year resident of Redwood City, and I am writing to express my concern with the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program, which fails to address community concerns about police involvement in mental health calls. Rather than remove police from the response to mental health crises, the pilot program continues to involve police, thereby continuing to criminalize mental health crises.

When police are the first responders to mental health calls, the situation is escalated, increasing fear, anxiety, and tension for someone who is already under a great deal of stress. A more effective model at de-escalating crises and increasing public safety would be one where police are not the first responders, but rather a mental health expert, perhaps in partnership with an EMT. This is the model followed by the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team, a model which I would like the Board to consider.

I am asking you to look into the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team model, and to seriously investigate how it might be implemented in San Mateo County. It's time to stop traumatizing our neighbors in crisis.

Thank you.

--Ann Myers

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Sabine Won <sabinedwon@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:41 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: fix Community and Wellness Crisis program

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I appreciate that you're working to make San Mateo County safe for all of us. Unfortunately, I believe that the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program criminalizes mental health crises.

I appreciate all that the police do for us in San Mateo County. It's clear that they already have too much on their plate, so they should not be burdened with the responsibility of dealing with mental illnesses. Taking them out of crisis responses would free the police to fight crime while allowing other qualified professionals to take care of mental health crises.

At a recent SURJ San Mateo meeting, we heard the traumatic experience by a mother and son in Belmont who called 911 to deal with a family crisis event. It was extremely scary to have police be the first contact for this family. It seems pretty clear that the policy which requires police to show up before mental health professionals needs to be changed.

The Street Crisis Response Team used in San Francisco has been very successful. I urge you to model our crisis response on that and help keep our communities safer for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sabine Won

Sukhmani Purewal

From: Cristina dos Santos <cdossantos08@googlemail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:39 PM
To: CMO_BoardFeedback
Subject: Public Comment to Board of Supervisors

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am a resident of San Mateo County and member of SURJ San Mateo (Showing Up for Racial Justice San Mateo).

I write regarding the Community Wellness and Crisis Team pilot program. This pilot program still criminalizes mental health issues. Please dissent from the pilot program. There are other models out there that are proven to be effective and safe, such as CAHOOTS and the San Francisco Street Crisis Response Team model. These models involve responses to mental health situations that do not include police officers. This frees up the police to address actual crime and ensures that those trained in matters of mental health, conflict resolution, and deescalation are the first responders.

Thank you,

Cristina dos Santos
202-689-9584
110 Sonja Road
South San Francisco, CA 94080