



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: HEALTH

File #: 24-076

Board Meeting Date: 1/30/2024

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Louise F. Rogers, Chief, San Mateo County Health
Jei Africa, Director, Behavioral Health, and Recovery Services
Subject: Additional Positions to Comply with CARE Act

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the addition of one permanent Full-time Mental Health Program Specialist; two new permanent full-time Psychiatric Social Workers/Marriage Family Therapists II; one new permanent full-time Peer Support Specialist; and one new permanent Full-time Legal Office Specialist to start on January 1, 2024.

BACKGROUND:

California Senate Bill 1338 established the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act to provide community-based behavioral health services and support to individuals living with untreated schizophrenia spectrum or other psychotic disorders through a new civil court process. The CARE Act creates a civil court process and requires Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) to conduct assessments and create voluntary CARE agreements or court-ordered CARE plans that may include comprehensive treatment, housing, and supportive services for up to two years.

Additionally, Senate Bill 317 authorizes the court to divert a client to CARE Court upon finding a defendant incompetent to stand trial on a misdemeanor charge.

DISCUSSION:

BHRS is mandated to attend CARE Court proceedings, assess petitions for eligibility criteria and services needed, write evaluations, create CARE agreements or plans, and link to services detailed in the CARE agreements or plans.

In order to meet these requirements, the following additional positions are being requested:

- One Mental Health Program Specialist will provide programmatic and clinical supervision to both AOT and CARE programs; assist with court petitions for AOT and CARE Court and serve as an expert witness; investigate petitioned clients; write assessments and CARE plans;

attend court proceedings.

- Two Psychiatric Social Workers/Marriage Family Therapists II - Licensed behavioral health clinicians are required by state law to evaluate the clients for CARE Court eligibility and serve as expert witnesses in court; investigate petitioned clients; write assessments and CARE plans; and attend court proceedings.
- One Peer Support Specialist I/II will provide outreach and supportive services to individuals referred to CARE Court; assist clients with stabilizing in the community and connecting to resources; and offer support to individuals and their family members during the CARE process.
- One Legal Office Specialist will assist in reviewing, organizing, and documenting the receipt of referrals for CARE Court; draft documents for the court to initiate a hearing on the merits of petitions; schedule clients for the case management, clinical evaluation, and review hearings.

These positions are considered complex to fill and will require extensive training. CARE staff are required to market and provide information on CARE to the community three months prior to the implementation of CARE Court per the CARE Act. Recruitment must start immediately to begin CARE Court outreach and marketing - followed by accepting petitions and participating in CARE Court operations - as soon as possible. These positions are being presented to the Board in this separate memorandum and resolution to ensure that they are highlighted, given the nature of the positions and the program. These positions will also be reflected in the County's Salary Resolution if the Board approves adding the positions.

Due to similarities of eligibility and processes, Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) and CARE Court will be handled by a single team. AOT currently consists of a Psychiatric Social Worker II, Mental Health Counselor, and a part-time Deputy Public Guardian. The team is supervised by a Clinical Services Manager.

It is anticipated that 100% of clients referred to CARE will receive needed treatment and support.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

Measure	FY 2023-24 Estimated	FY 2024-25 Projected
Percentage of clients referred to CARE that receive needed treatment and support	100%	100%

FISCAL IMPACT:

These positions will be funded by 1991 Realignment. The annual cost for these positions is \$650,385 and is incorporated into the BHRS FY 2023-24 budget. There is no Net County Cost.