



Staff Report

File #: 21-508

Version: 1

Date: 12/13/2021

Item #: 5.b.

TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager
FROM: Trevor Womack, Chief of Police

SUBJECT:

Operational Assessment of Salem Police Department's responses to calls involving the threat of suicide

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods
Result Area(s): Safe Community

SUMMARY:

Crisis Systems Management LLC (CSM) was engaged to conduct the review of Salem Police Department's response to individuals threatening suicide. Crisis Systems Management's review is attached to this staff report (Attachment 1), and Crisis Systems Management staff will present their findings.

ISSUE:

Operational assessment of Salem Police Department's response to calls involving the threat of suicide.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The Salem Police Department has incorporated the recommendations of this report into department policy and day to day response. The Department continues to provide more officers Crisis Intervention Training to improve the effectiveness of our response and the clarity of our police

reports. When available, the Department uses our Behavioral Health officers as the first responder to persons in crisis. The Department is actively looking for ways to expand the Behavioral Health team.

In addition to the review of response to people in crisis, the Department strengthened language in its policy to identify the sanctity of life with the following language, "The Salem Police Department is committed to upholding the civil rights of all individuals, protecting human life and property and maintaining civil order. The City's commitment to public safety includes ensuring the welfare of members of the public, its officers and professional staff, with an emphasis on the sanctity of life and showing respect to all people."

BACKGROUND:

In 2012, Salem police officers were dispatched to a residence where a person (Chase Hammer) was reported to be experiencing a mental health crisis, threatening suicide and in possession of a handgun. A confrontation followed and Mr. Hammer was fatally shot.

The City was later sued by the Estate of Mr. Hammer and his family, where a settlement was reached. The Salem Police Department has worked to meet all of the terms of the settlement agreement. The final step of this agreement is to have outside specialists review the Salem Police Department's response to suicide calls for a 5-year period. The assessment is being made public and presented to the Salem City Council in accordance with the agreement.

CSM personnel represent a full spectrum of law enforcement experience from local, state, federal, and military agencies across the United States. For nearly two decades, CSM has conducted a myriad of responsible and legally defensible investigations, evaluations, and statistical analyses for a variety of crisis-related law enforcement and military activities.

George Burke
Deputy Chief - Investigations

Attachments:

1. CSM Operational Assessment
- 2.
- 3.