



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager *SHH*
Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager *BM*

DATE: April 18, 2024

SUBJECT: **Suicide Prevention and Outreach (Resolution No. 20230921-068)**

We wanted to provide you with an update on [Resolution No. 20230921-068](#) which directed the City Manager to engage in community prevention and awareness outreach and initiation of an amendment to City Code regarding placement of suicide prevention materials in archery ranges and shooting facilities. The Development Services Department is initiating an amendment to Section 4-3-45 of the City Code and anticipates bringing the item to Council for consideration in summer 2024.

Supporting Community Partners

Integral Care is designated as the Local Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authority for Travis County and as such, is the primary responsible party for providing mental health services and support. The City and many community partners work in collaboration with Integral Care on suicide prevention and awareness efforts. Suicide Prevention information can be accessed on the Integral Care website at: <https://integralcare.org/en/suicide-prevention/> and is also provided as a community resource on [Austin Public Health](#) (APH) and [Austin Police Department](#) (APD) websites.

While just one of many activities, APH provides quarterly reports to Integral Care regarding suicide reported deaths in Austin. This same data - [rates of death by suicide](#) - in addition to [reports of 5 or more poor mental health days](#) are gathered and analyzed by APH and shared publicly on the City's Open Data Portal as important metrics gauging the well-being of our community. This data is used by Integral Care to inform the type of resources needed for Austin residents.

Integral Care and Ascension Seton are the co-chairs of the [Austin-Central Texas Suicide Prevention Coalition](#) which is a collaboration of local government agencies, healthcare providers, schools and community-based organizations meeting monthly to "strive to reduce suicides through advocacy efforts, implementation of evidence-based strategies and trainings for schools, mental health service providers and the community." Members of the APD Victim Services unit attend the Suicide Prevention Coalition meeting.

One example of a recent partnership between APH, Integral Care, and Travis County was the development of a public awareness campaign called "[Ask, Listen, Talk, Repeat](#)," to address the mounting

mental health crisis among children and teens. APH features the campaign on its [website](#). Phase I started in May 2023 and Phase II started fall of 2023. Phase I of the campaign focused on normalizing mental health conversations and reducing stigma around mental health. APH created conversation cards to help start conversations between caregivers and children, reiterating the idea that talking about mental health is beneficial. The cards are currently available in English and Spanish and will soon be available in Vietnamese and Arabic. Phase II of the campaign focuses on identifying signs of mental health struggles. APH provided educational information regarding behaviors that signal a mental health struggle through social media, radio, television, bus advertising, and videos that were displayed in movie theaters.

The campaign aims to equip parents and caregivers with resources to start critical mental health conversations, recognize signs of distress, and seek professional help when needed. The program promotes a safe space for open discussions about mental well-being, working to normalize these conversations and reduce associated stigmas.

The Communications and Public Information Office highlighted the “Ask, Listen, Talk, Repeat” campaign on [Episode 151 of CityView](#) in December 2023. This feature was also highlighted in social media posts on the City’s X and Facebook accounts.

In addition to an active role with the Prevention Coalition, the Austin Police Department’s (APD) Victims Services engages with Austin school districts to offer services when events occur that impact campuses or students. Victims Services counselors also provide referrals and safety plans to victims of crime who are having suicidal ideations.

First Responder Training and Equipment

As the first responders on calls for emergency services, Austin’s public safety professionals within APD and Austin Travis County Emergency Medical Service (ATCEMS) are trained to respond to mental health situations. All APD sworn staff complete a minimum 40 hours of training focused on mental health starting in the Cadet Training Academy and through additional courses offered throughout an officer’s career.

ATCEMS Community Health Paramedics receive at least 16 hours of initial training through the [Centre for Suicide Prevention \(suicideinfo.ca\)](#). This course trains on how to intervene with an individual who is thinking about suicide and is incorporated into ATCEMS’ crisis mental health response. In addition, the standard assessment of every mental health patient includes a suicide screening utilizing the [Columbia - Suicide Severity Rating Scale](#).

The mental health of our first responders is also a priority for our departments and each department provides training opportunities and assistance programs to employees.

The City is a steadfast partner in this important community work spanning many departments. If you have questions about Austin Public Health’s collaborations with Integral Care, please contact Adrienne Sturup, Director, at Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov; for Austin Travis County Emergency Medical Service contact Chief Robert Luckritz at Robert.Luckritz@austintexas.gov; and for Austin Police Department contact Interim Chief Robin Henderson at Robin.Henderson@austintexas.gov.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Veronica Briseño, Assistant City Manager