



DATE: February 25, 2019

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

FROM: Jay Hagen, Fire Chief, 452-6895
Fire Department

SUBJECT: **Citizen Advocates for Referral and Education Services (CARES)**

This is for information only; no action is required.

The City Council will hear an update on advancements in service to the community through the CARES program, including enhancing partnerships and anticipating the future of service.

Recent Weather Events

During the recent snow events (February 3 – 13, 2019) CARES1 responded to residents who were unable to fill critical prescriptions due to lack of transportation. This was achieved by coordinating with local pharmacies and Overlake Hospital Medical Center to have prescriptions filled and organized into medi-sets so that CARES1 could pick up and deliver needed medications to residents.

A Plan was developed to work with dispatch (NORCOM), local providers, City of Bellevue and King County Offices of Emergency Management through partnerships and via local media to inform city residents of the ability of the Bellevue Fire Department to assist in obtaining medications and transportation to critical medical appointments for City of Bellevue residents. King County Office of Emergency Management had put in place, with the assistance of Hopelink, transportation for county residents to critical medical appoints only as requested by the medical provider not directly from residents. Using CARES1, the Bellevue Fire Department was ready to assist in this effort, if needed, for City of Bellevue residents.

Overview of the Program:

Bellevue is a caring community where residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Since 2012, Bellevue has operated the Bellevue Fire CARES program. The purpose of this program is to identify the source and the reason for a resident's 9-1-1 call and to connect them with resources and services that will address their core needs. Modeled after a successful program in Spokane, Bellevue partners with eight different graduate schools of social work to place masters-level students in practicum placements with Bellevue Fire CARES. These students form a team of advocates that respond to the needs of some of Bellevue's most vulnerable residents, as identified by fire crews and police during a 9-1-1 response.

Upon receiving an on-line referral, advocates perform home visits (in pairs) to assess the client's needs and, through follow-up and coordination, connect them to community resources that will more appropriately address their needs. The CARES team is comprised of an average of 10-14 MSW (Master of Social Work) students, working an average of 16 to 20 hours per week, providing enough staffing to allow for significant flexibility in how long a case may be kept open and the amount of time advocates can spend with each client.

Engaging with all residents and stakeholders and continuing to be a community that cares for all people.

Since 2012 the program has evolved and now receives referrals from other City departments including Code Compliance, Parks and Mediation. In many cases, the CARES team is the safety net that catches individuals who have fallen through the cracks of the larger social service system. Due to their ability to meet clients in their homes and to take the necessary time to gather information and build rapport, CARES advocates are often able to provide clients a level of support and advocacy that most community agencies are not able to offer – resulting in better outcomes for the clients. Because of these successes, CARES has built strong partnerships with other community providers that gives clients access and preference to services that they may not otherwise be able to receive. The result has been enhanced support services to some of our neediest residents, while at the same time freeing up scarce, costly emergency response resources. The Bellevue Fire CARES program also initiated an Eastside High Utilizer Work Group where community partners (e.g. Overlake Hospital, Adult Protective Services, Sound Mental Health, Therapeutic Health Services, King County Behavioral Health and Recovery Division), with whom CARES has already developed strong working relationships, meet monthly to create coordinated care plans for shared clients.

- Reasons for Referral**
- Mobility
 - Falls / Trips
 - Mental Health
 - Medical
 - Living Conditions
 - Obesity
 - Pt. cannot self-advocate
 - Pt. / Caregiver Overwhelmed
 - Substance Abuse
 - Self-neglect
 - Homelessness
 - Domestic Violence
 - Victim of a crime

Educating future social workers

The CARES program provides unique training grounds for social work graduate students. The opportunity to work with first responders, hospitals, and community organizations as well as to engage clients in their homes is an unusual combination for a practicum site. Our student advocates learn to work as a team, engage with other professionals, and navigate larger systems on behalf of their clients. This prepares them for work in diverse settings and, we have found, for highly competitive, advanced practicum placements in hospitals and other health care settings.

CARES1

Our residents have the services they need.

Firefighters and police officers report that sometimes neither they nor a resident know the available appropriate community resources to meet an individual's needs, thus engaging the trained and knowledgeable CARES team is invaluable. A CARES referral often results in advocates connecting individuals who have frequent or single non-emergent situations with early prevention solutions or intervention services so that current issues do not later become

emergency situations or result in loss of life. In response to these identified areas of opportunity, as well as feedback from fire crews desiring a more immediate response from CARES, Bellevue piloted the CARES1 Response Unit.

Beginning on August 1, 2017 and funded through grants, Bellevue staffed a unit with professional social workers. This unit operates weekdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (during the hours that community services are open) and is available to respond anywhere in Bellevue Fires' service area. Bellevue firefighters and police officers can call the unit to respond, at the time of incident, to any type of call, from minor, non-emergency (low acuity) to life threatening. Unlike the CARES follow-up unit staffed by MSW students, the Response Unit can work with residents at the time of the call, during their time of greatest need, while the individual is still in crisis. This can result in an initial diversion of the individual from the ER and potentially in a long-term solution to the needs that resulted in the 9-1-1 call.

Following a tiered model, once CARES1 has completed their initial engagement with the client, the case is turned over to the CARES team for ongoing referrals and coordination. This leaves CARES1 available and in-service for additional incidents. CARES1 may be added to a call at the request of the responding unit and is able to meet the initial response unit at the scene, meet them at the emergency room, or stay at the scene to engage with family members when a patient has been transported. CARES1's engagement of residents at the time of the crisis has reduced the number of individuals who decline services or with whom CARES is unable to make contact for follow-up.

Program goals for 2019 and beyond

Regional leadership and influence

As part of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division, the CARES program has developed a parallel organization with a CARES Leadership Team to strategically plan the program's vision, mission, goals, performance measures, and program direction. The overall CARES program has grown from two students with weekly supervision by a volunteer MSW, to a fulltime program administrator with 19 students and a three-person response unit (CARES1). CARES1 is currently funded through 2019 with a King County EMS grant; an Ordinance authorizing acceptance of this grant will be presented to the Council for approval in the coming weeks. Bellevue staff is working through the King County levy planning process to secure funding to continue the program beyond 2019.
