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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 10, 2024

TO: Chair and Members of the Personnel and Finance Committee

FROM: Luis Bixler, MBA, Director of Public Safety Communications

RE: Behavioral Health Call Diversion Supervisor (3531) Vacant for More Than Six Months

County Ordinance 29.52(15) requires the Personnel and Finance Committee and the County Executive approve filling positions that are vacant longer than six (6) months. We have one (1) **Behavioral Health Call Diversion Supervisor (#3531)** that has been vacant for longer than six (6) months. This position has intentionally remained vacant as Public Safety Communications (PSC) gathered information to determine how this position would fit the behavioral health and call diversion needs of the public. When this position came available to fill on July 1, 2023 PSC was still gathering information from other Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's) on how they used behavioral health and call diversion within their own centers and found there to be very little standardization as having mental health specialists embedded in a PSAP is a new concept. Dane County was fortunate to be selected by the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab on August 22, 2023. This allowed PSC to work with industry experts and cohorts from other communities on Alternative 911 Emergency Response Implementation. We delayed hiring the position until we were able to fully utilize the input from these experts and cohorts. On September 27, 2023 PSC received authorization to expand the mental health team with four new frontline staff. PSC pivoted and put in a request to reclassify this position to a Management class position to allow it to supervise the four newly authorized positions, which has also delayed the process in filling this position. Therefore, we are respectfully requesting an exemption be made to this Ordinance to immediately fill the current Behavioral Health Call Diversion Supervisor position.

What is the nature of the work or what is the essential function of the position?

The Behavioral Health Call Diversion Supervisor (BHCDS) will develop, and implement comprehensive behavioral health call diversion programming within Public Safety Communications (PSC). The BHCDS will supervise a team of Behavioral Health Call Diversion Specialists. The primary goal of the BHCD Division is to provide individuals the most appropriate response to their unique behavioral health needs. The BHCD Unit will triage, assess, refer and respond remotely to behavioral health related calls for service (CFS) that can be resolved over the phone. It will also redirect non-emergent, non-life-threatening behavioral health related calls away from traditional first responder resources (Law Enforcement and EMS) and toward more appropriate alternatives like Mobile Crisis and CARES (Community Alternative Response Emergency Services) when

possible.

How has this function been fulfilled without this position?

Currently our callers' in Mental Health Crisis calls are taken by Communicators. Communicators are trained to quickly assess a caller's needs and send the correct resources or refer the caller to an entity better equipped to assist them. Communicators are trained in very basic crisis intervention, but do not have the skills to provide greater assistance.

What will the impact on the Department's function and mission if the position remains vacant?

Caller's mental health needs are often directed to law enforcement, not meeting the needs of the caller. PSC Communicators are trained to triage callers, but are not trained, nor can they dedicate the time to meet the needs of callers in crisis situations without failing to meet the needs of our callers' in other life-threatening situations. Not moving a management level position to help lead a new division dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of our callers will mean continued misuse of sending resources that are not equipped to help resolve callers' needs.