



City of San José Youth Commission

December 11, 2019

To Rules Committee

Re : San José Youth Commission Policy Recommendation.

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council,

Please accept and add the San José Youth Commission Public Safety Policy Recommendations attached to the Rules Committee agenda.

On October 28, 2019, the San José Youth Commission held a Mental Health Town Hall. Youth throughout the city convened to share their concerns and thoughts around the issues of mental health and the effects it has on their peers. As a result, the District 10 Commissioner and the District 10 Youth Advisory Council conducted further research, analyzed their findings, and created the attached Public Safety Policy Recommendation. This recommendation aligns with the 2019-2020 Youth Commission annual workplan which states, the Commission will address specific issues the Youth Commissioners deem important to address on behalf of their peers.

The Policy Recommendations have been peer reviewed and feedback was gathered at the Youth Commission monthly meeting on November 25, 2019. Members of the public shared their thoughts and showed support for this item. The recommendation has also been vetted by the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Steering Committee on December 5, 2019.

Please accept the Youth Commission's Public Safety Policy Recommendation attached.

Sincerely,

San Jose Youth Commission

San José Youth Commission

Policy Team: Public Health

Discussion Area: Policy

Dheerj Jasuja (District 10 Youth Commissioner)

I. Recommendation

Afterschool coordinators, employees of community centers, and staff of other organizations under the City's jurisdiction that interact with children (aged 0-17 years old) be required to undergo mental health training so that they can properly assist children who face mental health issues and/or crises.

II. Background

The youth of today are in the midst of a mental health crisis as millions of kids across the nation from ages 3 to 17 years old are diagnosed with mental illnesses. Our city is no exception. As the pressure of school, social life, sleep-deprivation, and other adverse childhood experiences mounts in San Jose, increasingly kids are susceptible to and are diagnosed with mental illnesses. Unfortunately, many of them may not receive the treatment that they need for a multitude of reasons—for example, cultural norms, lack of access to treatment facilities, and a lack of recognition for their illnesses—which means that it is essential for the adults that do work with youth to know the signs and to help those with mental afflictions.

III. Research

The mental health crisis is a national issue as according to the CDC, “7.1% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 4.4 million) have diagnosed anxiety. 3.2% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 1.9 million) have diagnosed depression,” which clearly demonstrates the pervasiveness of mental illness in our country. To make matters worse, Elliot Brenner finds for the Stanford Social Innovation Review that “At least 85 percent of those in need of treatment do not get it.” When looking at mental illness rates a little closer to home, the US Department of Health and Human Services illustrates that 32% of California HS students were depressed in 2017. Considering that there were about 2 million high school students in 2017 (California Department of Education) that means about 600,000 high school students were depressed in California alone. Clearly, mental health illnesses, such as depression, are pervasive in California, and our city isn't simply left out from this epidemic, especially because of the extreme levels of competition present in middle and high schools across the city.

It's also important to recognize the efforts made in order to curtail the prevalence of suicide in schools. Recently, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 1767, which extended the power of AB 2246, making suicide prevention efforts mandatory in schools for grades K-12. Therefore, the City of San José is obligated to take efforts to improve the ability of afterschool coordinators to assist

youth who have mental illnesses as the mental health crisis is recognized state-wide. Moreover, it is also important to bring up the issue of teacher mental health training to the Santa Clara County Board of Education as only a few efforts are being made to train teachers about mental illnesses, but there aren't any comprehensive efforts to address this crisis in schools. In fact, Santa Clara County works with only 11 school districts total—Palo Alto Unified School District, Santa Clara Office of Education Alternative Education and Special Education, Los Gatos Union School District, Los Gatos Saratoga High School District, Sunnyvale School District, East Side Union High School District, Mountain View Whisman School District, Milpitas Unified School District, Santa Clara Unified School District, and the Morgan Hill Unified School District—through their partnership with the HEARD Alliance and Kognito, illustrating the need to institute city-wide (and hopefully county-wide) policy that promotes mental health training for educators, and especially for afterschool coordinators and city front line staff from all youth programming.

IV. Advantages

This is a relatively low-cost (Diaz 2018), highly efficient, and highly effective approach to tackle the mental health crisis. Accepting this recommendation and making it a city ordinance would effectively be stationing, trained mental health trusted adults in every youth program in San Jose, minimizing the potential for mental illnesses to go untreated.

V. Solvency

Training adults to recognize mental illnesses may result in early detection of these illnesses and the youth may receive better treatment sooner. Moreover, training adults in helping those with mental illnesses may result in early intervention and successful recoveries for many youths.

VI. Potential Setbacks

The cost of staff coverage to take this training may be too much to implement across San José's youth programs or individuals who received these training may not employ the knowledge learned.

VII. Closing Statement

The Youth Commission stands in strong support of the efforts of those who have worked to better the lives of millions of children afflicted with mental illnesses and urges the San José City Council to do so as well.

VIII. Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_crisis_of_youth_mental_health

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/facts-and-stats/national-and-state-data-sheets/adolescent-mental-health-fact-sheets/california/index.html>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefenrollmentcomp.asp>

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1767

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2246

IX. Collaborated With:

San Jose Youth Commissioners, Santa Clara Office of Behavioral Health, and the District 10 YAC

X. Youth Commission Agenda Item:

New Business Item: VII. D

Motion: Passed by the City of San José Youth Commission with a unanimous vote on November 25, 2019.