



SHAKER HEIGHTS

Memorandum

To: Members of City Council

From: William M. Ondrey Gruber, Director of Law

cc: David E. Weiss, Mayor
Matthew P. Carroll, CAO

Date: January 26, 2026

Re: **Contract with Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD)
for Employment Services for the First CALL Program**

Summary

City Council is being asked to enact legislation authorizing a contract with the Chagrin Valley Dispatch (CVD) Council, a regional dispatch center in which the City is a member, to provide employment services for the City's First CALL Program, to replace the contract currently held with Recovery Resources.

The Safety and Public Works Committee voted unanimously at their meeting on January 9th to recommend the contract approval to Council. A Committee member asked whether there would be any cost increase to the Program. The response was that it is not anticipated that there will be much if any increase to the cost of the Program. CVD may ask for an administrative overhead fee. The contract is not yet finalized. CVD's Executive Committee will consider the issue on January 14th and then we will finalize a contract before Council considers the issue at the end of January.

The Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend the contract approval by Council at their meeting on January 20, 2025. There was a discussion about the potential future move of the entire Program to CVD, which has been discussed since the Program was developed, but is not part of the current request being made to CVD, which is limited to assuming the hiring and payroll services.

Finance Committee members asked about the following:

- Is there a Plan B if CVD does not take over the Recovery Resources contract? The Administration has discussed several other possible plans to transition away from Recovery Resources.
- If CVD take over the Recovery Resources contract, will the Program Director who is a City employee handle all training, supervision and oversight? Yes.
- What is the impact of losing the expertise of Recovery Resources? The Program Director has been handling virtually all work to train, supervise and oversee the current employees hired by Recovery Resources, so a change to CVD will not result in any practical impact on the operation of the Program.

Origin and Organization of First CALL Program

In 2021, the City created a pilot Mental Health Response Program (MHRP) by contracting with MetroHealth System's Recovery Resources, and in November 2022, the City hired a full-time Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) to continue the work of the MHRP. The MHRP responded to eligible crisis calls simultaneously with, and separately from, first responders, engaged with persons in crisis and first responders to assist persons in crisis, and provided ongoing follow-up and referrals to other programs, to address any barriers to getting help, and to offer ongoing support.

In March 2023, in response to the success of the MHRP, the City, along with the cities of Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, decided to establish a program similar to the MHRP. These five cities had been working together since 2016, when they jointly formed the Heights Hillcrest Communications Center (HHCC), a regional dispatch center. HHCC merged into CVD in 2022.

On July 12, 2024, the five cities entered into an agreement to form the First Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage (CALL) Program, to be operated by the City of Shaker Heights on behalf of the five cities. The cities applied for and received a grant from the Department of Justice, COPS office, FY23 Implementing Crisis Intervention Teams - Community Police Development in the amount of \$399,846, as the first source of funding for the Program. The Program subsequently received additional funding from Cuyahoga County, the Gund Foundation, the ADAMHS Board, and a SCIP Grant. The five cities also contributed funds to the Program.

Operation of the Program and Recovery Resources Agreement

To operate the Program, the City hired the Program Coordinator, Annette Wallace. The City then contracted with Recovery Resources (RR), which is a part of MetroHealth System, to hire and train staffing for the Program.

Pursuant to the authority of Ordinance 24-16, enacted on February 26, 2024, the City and RR entered into a two-year contract on May 15, 2024, through May 15, 2026. Under the contract, RR agreed to provide services, including the hiring of licensed mental health professionals and peer support specialists to work in the First CALL Program in the Program's five communities and at the joint dispatch center operated by CVD.

The City and RR entered into three contract amendments to allow for the hiring of qualified personnel, including a supervisory, for the Program at salaries consistent with the market, and to add a Mental Health Specialist position.

On July 23, 2024, the City entered into a contract with CVD in which CVD agreed to provide working space at the Cleveland Heights Center of CVD for one person to work as a mental health response support liaison between CVD and the Program.

Recovery Resources Services

Under the Agreement, RR has provided professional services for the Program, as directed by the Coordinator of the Program, Annette Wallace, a City employee. RR has handled the hiring, training and overseeing of licensed mental health professionals and peer support specialists that work exclusively on the Program. The Program Coordinator is involved in hiring and performance reviews. The RR Agreement spells out the standards for the professionals to be hired, and the maximum salary.

Clinicians and peer support specialists serve as mobile alternative response team members, responding in real-time to emergency calls placed to 911, with each two-member team assigned to two of the cities in the Program. The teams respond independently but simultaneously with first responders to crisis calls. The teams may also be asked to respond independently to a 911 call if deemed appropriate by dispatch and Program protocols.

The teams work with the Program Coordinator for clinical supervision, risk assessments, and daily task assignments. Also, one Clinician is intended to serve as an alternative response team member inside of the CVD joint dispatch center. All employees complete training agreed upon by the Program Coordinator and RR, including, but not limited to, risk assessment, motivational interviewing, de-escalation techniques, mental health disorders, addiction, first aid/CPR, trauma informed care, HIPAA, physical disabilities, stages of change, screening tools, documentation standards, and applicable policies/procedures.

The teams work collaboratively with police departments, fire departments, CVD, community agencies, and other city/community stakeholders. They complete post crisis follow-up phone calls and/or in-person visits as assigned by the Program Coordinator to those referred/engaged in the Program. They also engage in preventative outreach to community members as assigned

RR also assists with related trainings for city first responders and the Program.

The City, with Program funding, provides the teams with vehicles, laptop computers, cell phones a clothing allowance to employees, office supplies, a Motorola Radio, and other supplies as needed.

Recovery Resources Transition to CVD

On October 2, 2025, it was announced that Recovery Resources would conclude all of its direct services and programming by December 31, 2025, and then go out of business entirely by summer 2026. The City then began considering the alternatives for continuing the employee hiring services for the Program.

As the five First CALL Program cities are all CVD members, and some other CVD members are interested in joining the Program, the City reached out to CVD to discuss the possibility of contracting with CVD for the same employment services currently provided by RR.

CVD staff has expressed support for providing the employment services for the First CALL Program, subject to approval by the CVD Council. On January 14, the CVD Executive Committee agreed to move the proposal on to the full CVD Council either on January 27 or in February, conditioned on the CVD Law Director coming to agreement with the City's Law Director on a proposed contract that would protect CVD from any financial obligation under the contract.

Request and Recommendation

It is requested that Council approve legislation authorizing the City, on behalf of the 5-city First CALL Program, to enter into an employment services agreement with CVD, substantially in the same form as the agreement with Recovery Resources. It is requested that the legislation be adopted on first reading and as an emergency, so the Program may transition timely in order to avoid any disruption of the Program as the Recovery Resources' contract ends.

