

## LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Administrative Code - Urgent Care SF]

**Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to establish Urgent Care SF (“the Initiative”), a mental health program designed to provide increased access to mental health services, substance use treatment, and clinically appropriate housing to homeless individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders; to require the Department of Public Health (“DPH”) to immediately provide services to the hundreds of persons with the most acute behavioral health needs, and to expeditiously expand services to reach an estimated 4,000 persons; to require DPH to seek recovery of a portion of the costs of the Initiative by enrolling eligible participants in federal and state health insurance and public benefit programs; to require DPH to submit an annual report to the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors outlining the resources required to implement the Initiative; and to make it the policy of the City and County of San Francisco to promote public safety by deploying police officers on foot and bicycle, enforcing laws prohibiting the possession of illegal drugs, and prioritizing the enforcement of drug laws against individuals who are offered and have refused the opportunity to be taken to a Drug Sobering Center.**

### Existing Law

Chapter 15 of the San Francisco Health Code governs the Community Mental Health Service of the City and County of San Francisco (“City”), by:

- Establishing a Community Mental Health Service, as required by state law;
- Establishing the Mental Health Board, consisting of 17 members, to review the City’s mental health needs, services, facilities, and special programs, advise the Board of Supervisors, Health Commission, Director of Health, and the Director of Mental Health as to any aspect of local mental health programs, and review and comment on the City’s performance outcome data and communicate its findings to the State Mental Health Commission, among other duties;
- Enumerating the services that the Community Mental Health Service may provide, including outpatient psychiatric clinics, in-patient psychiatric clinics, rehabilitation services, and psychiatric consultant services, among other services; and
- Declaring the intent of the Board of Supervisors to more specifically delineate the long-range planning and budgetary uses of the San Francisco Community Mental Health Services Plan.

Chapter 15 also requires that the Department of Public Health (“DPH”) provide a single standard of mental health services access and care for indigent and uninsured residents of the City and Medi-Cal beneficiaries who are residents of the City.

Amendments to Current Law

The proposed ordinance would establish Urgent Care SF, an evidence-based mental health program designed to provide mental health services, substance use services, and medically-appropriate treatment and housing. Subject to the budgetary and fiscal provisions of the Charter, Urgent Care SF would provide enhanced, coordinated services and housing to a target population consisting of San Francisco residents who: 1) are experiencing homelessness; 2) have co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders; and 3) are Medi-Cal beneficiaries, or are low-income and lack health insurance.

The proposed ordinance would require Urgent Care SF to:

- Provide the target population with necessary navigation, mental health, and substance use services, access to appropriate medication, and access to clinically appropriate treatment and housing;
- Ensure that the City has a sufficient number and type of beds to serve people with behavioral health disorders;
- Establish a Drug Sobering Center that would offer clinical support, wrap-around services, and appropriate beds for individuals who are experiencing psychosis due to drug use;
- Modernize the Behavioral Health Access Center to serve as a central point of access to services, and ensure that the facility's hours are based on service needs;
- Establish a database that includes the entire portfolio of behavioral health beds that are managed or funded by DPH, in order to expedite placements for as many individuals as possible who are in need;
- Expand the San Francisco Fire Department's EMS-6 unit, including necessary additional staffing, equipment, and ambulances, to provide emergency care to individuals in crisis on the street; and
- Ensure that DPH, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and the Police Department coordinate the deployment of multiple interdepartmental teams, including the Street Medicine Team, the Mobile Crisis Team, and the Homeless Outreach Team.

To promote public safety, provide adequate response to individuals in crisis on the street, and address the threats to public safety associated with the public possession and consumption of heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other narcotics other than cannabis, the proposed ordinance would make it City policy to:

- Ensure a highly visible and approachable police presence on City streets by deploying police officers on foot or on bicycle;
- Enforce existing laws prohibiting the possession of illegal drugs, except on the site of a facility that is authorized to operate an overdose prevention program; and

- Prioritize enforcement of laws prohibiting the sale, distribution, and possession of illegal drugs other than cannabis against those individuals in crisis on the street who are offered and refuse the opportunity to be taken to the Drug Sobering Center.

DPH would implement Urgent Care SF by immediately providing services and clinically appropriate treatment and housing to the hundreds of homeless individuals whom DPH has determined to have the most acute behavioral health needs, and by expeditiously expanding the program to serve the estimated 4,000 individuals who are homeless and who also have both diagnosed mental health and substance use disorders.

### Background Information

DPH's Behavioral Health Services ("BHS") is the largest provider of behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment services, in the City. The annual budget of the BHS system of care as of Fiscal Year 2019-2020 was over \$300 million. BHS serves approximately 30,000 individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders in its clinical care delivery system each year.

The Behavioral Health Access Center ("BHAC") located at 1380 Howard Street is a key service access point. The BHAC provides low-barrier, centralized access to the behavioral health services system and helps San Franciscans find the appropriate mental health and substance use care for their needs. Staff members triage and assess clients' needs, help them enroll in benefit programs such as Medi-Cal, help them find placements in treatment programs, and connect them to other services like medical screenings and primary care. The BHAC serves residents of San Francisco who are Medi-Cal eligible, participants in Healthy San Francisco, or uninsured.

According to the City's Point-in-Time Count conducted in January 2019, there are about 8,000 people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco on any given night. But over the course of an entire year, many more people experience homelessness. According to DPH's records, in Fiscal Year 2018-2019, DPH and/or the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing served about 18,000 people experiencing homelessness. Of those 18,000 people, 4,000 have a history of both mental health and substance use disorders.

These 4,000 people are in critical need of help, as evidenced by their high use of urgent and emergency psychiatric services. They have the highest level of service needs and vulnerability, and require specialized solutions in order to reach stability and wellness. DPH and HSH agree that people experiencing homelessness with both mental health and substance use disorders are the most vulnerable members of our community and require immediate attention and care coordination.

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