

## CITY OF NANAIMO

### BUSINESS CASE – Police Mental Health Outreach Team Service (Car 67 Type Program)

#### CURRENT OVERVIEW

RCMP members are responding to an increasing number of calls for service that involve individuals dealing with mental health issues. Table 1 shows initial calls for service related to mental health over the past five years. These numbers provide scope on the increasing demand on police resources but are not truly reflective of all police calls for service that involve dealing with mental health concerns.

Initial Call Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 - mid Aug
Assist Mental Health Act	69	66	77	90	137	91
Check Well-Being	349	420	609	2,106	2,585	1,802
Suicidal Person	431	621	738	733	738	417
High Risk*/Missing	437*/55	822*/106	729*/96	600*/15	472*/13	533*/12

Table 1 – Mental Health Calls - High-risk missing person are closely linked with Island Health and Ministry of Children and Families

While there are currently no RCMP members dedicated specifically to address mental health calls, for 2020, the City has approved the addition of 15 new members over five years (3 members/yr.). One of the three members added in 2020 will be dedicated as a Mental Health Liaison Officer (MHLO), and will work on strengthening relationships and communication with community health partners.

#### BUSINESS ISSUE

The increase in calls is a drain on policing and police resources as police are asked to respond to individuals whose issues are better dealt with by professionals with a mental health and housing background.

Currently, Island Health have a number of outreach teams who deal with the City's vulnerable population but do not directly support the work of the RCMP.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME

This community partnership will help align service delivery to the correct partner agency.

The proposed program (The Police Mental Health Outreach Team) is an enhanced policing model that uses a specialized team to assist vulnerable citizens who have contact with police or require an emergency response. The focus of the team is on building relationships with these residents, assisting with connections to services, and increasing the safety of those who live and work in the City.

The program would be a partnership between the Nanaimo RCMP and Island Health (Mental Health and Addiction Services). A goal of the program would be to develop integrated strategies to address crime, community concerns, and personal crisis in an inclusive manner throughout the City.

Under the proposed program, a uniformed RCMP member and a clinical nurse specializing in mental health would work together and respond to calls received involving emotional and mental health issues. The team will drive in an unmarked police vehicle to enhance privacy of the individuals and families that they serve.

The program would provide on-site emotional and mental health assessments, crisis intervention and referrals to appropriate services. Referrals can be to local mental health centres, addictions services, and counselling services to name a few. The program would facilitate admission to hospital in cases where needed and will take over from regular general duty members the responsibility of dealing with mental health issues involved in particular calls where their specialized knowledge is required.

The creation of the program would require additional resources. The program could be composed of one or two - four RCMP member teams with a corresponding number of mental health workers provided by Island Health. One additional municipal support position would also be required to support every four RCMP members added. The program could be phased in over 2 years and preliminary estimates indicate an approx. annual cost of \$0.61 million for one team to \$1.35 million for two teams once fully implemented. Island Health would be required to fund the necessary investment for the nursing support to the team.

Establishing a Police Mental Health Outreach team is anticipated to:

- Proactively liaise with local agencies providing supports and services to citizens struggling with homelessness, addiction and/or mental health;
- Provide emergency response to police mental health calls and long term solutions through the Police Mental Health Liaison;
- Support Island Health mental health initiatives, including Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Intensive Case Management (ICM);
- Provide a visible presence of police, bylaws, and social services;
- Allow RCMP resources to be deployed to other key issues in the community;
- Build relationships with those impacted by homelessness, mental health and/or substance abuse;
- Seek out and provide alternative supports to individuals in need; and
- Protect property and businesses and work with the community to bring about solutions to local issues.

The RCMP are committed to a long term integrated and proactive response that is built on relationships with their partners and the community. When vulnerable persons receive support and develop increased capacity for healthy, safe living, this often leads to a reduction in criminal activity and a reduced demand on social services and policing.

## **OPTIONS**

### **Option #1 – Undertake a Feasibility Study to Establish a Police Mental Health Outreach Team**

Engage the services of a consultant to undertake a feasibility study to establish a police mental health outreach team with the goal of phasing implementation over 2022 and 2023. The consultant would examine best practice from municipalities such as Surrey to create a program that is suitable for the City. Part of the work would entail engagement with Island Health to determine commitment to the funding of the mental health workers beginning in 2022.

Benefits:

- Allows a timely approach to delivering a new service;
- Enables a complete costing of the program for inclusion in the 2022 – 2026 Financial Plan;
- Ensures Island Health has resources and commitment to the program;

- Enables RCMP to work with partners to build the program;
- Establishment of the program would assist the RCMP by providing an intergrated approach in attending mental health calls; and
- Establishment of the program would provide RCMP resources capacity to address other community priorities.

Weaknesses:

- Undertaking the feasibility study would delay implementation of the program until 2022; and
- Requires partnerships with Island Health which may not be forthcoming.

Financial Analysis:

A feasibility study is approximately \$100,000.

**Option #2 – Add One Police Mental Health Outreach Team**

Approve three additional members and one municipal support employee for April 1, 2022. Due to the current RCMP timelines for filling member positions, Staff would undertake the process for approvals in 2021. During 2020/2021, the new MHLO will work on the roll out of the program and strengthening the relationships and communication with partners. One year after team implementation an assessment would be conducted to determine if an additional team is required. Success of the team would be dependent on Island Health committing resources effective with their 2021/2022 budget cycle.

Benefits:

- The need for an integrated mental health approach is significant and growing in the City of Nanaimo and creation of the team in 2022 would be well received by the community;
- A phased approach will enable the RCMP to refine operations;
- Additional resources towards the Mental Health Outreach Team would enable the RCMP to redeploy the remaining members to other critical policing issues in the City; and
- Ability to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities of a specialized team of members to assist vulnerable sector with 24/7 service delivery

Weaknesses:

- For the program to be effective, Island Health needs to commit financial and human resources to the program to match the City's contribution. If Island Health does not have the capacity to support the program, it will not be effective. Staff would not recommend proceeding without a commitment from Island Health.

Financial Analysis:

- The projected impact for three additional members and one municipal support employee effective April 1, 2022 is \$437,400 in 2022 and \$595,000 in 2023.

### **Option #3 – Maintain Status Quo**

#### Benefits:

- No increase to operating budgets.

#### Weaknesses:

- RCMP will continue to respond to mental health calls without support from Island Health;
- Opportunity to develop an innovative partnership is delayed; and
- Increased likelihood of a negative interaction, which could affect the entire community.

#### Financial Analysis:

N/A

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Option #1 Undertake a Feasibility Study to Establish a Police Mental Health Outreach Team.