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**Sponsor:** County Manager's Office and Safety and Justice

**Meeting Date:** 11/16/2021

**Title:** American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Violence Prevention Initiatives

**File Number:** 2021-645

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**Background and Rationale:**

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments. ARPA underscores a focus on responding to disproportionately impacted low-income families and communities of color, with specific emphasis on supporting community violence intervention programs to address health disparities and social determinants of health. In April 2021, the County Manager recognized violence prevention as a “Tier 4” priority for ARPA resource allocation in Ramsey County.

The following initiatives offer community driven proactive wellness support that shifts the responsibility for violence prevention and safety from being primarily the responsibility of law enforcement to a partnership involving those who are most impacted by violence in the community. Investing in our communities in this way will have a direct and immediate impact on reducing violence and will also have long term benefits of communities being able to care for themselves, innovative funding partnerships, and shifting resources to support the expressed needs of our community.

**Investment Area 1- Appropriate Responses Initiative (ARI) \$13.2 million request**

The Appropriate Responses Initiative (ARI) transforms 911 Emergency Communication Center (ECC) dispatch processes, public wellness systems (Social Services and Public Health), and community institutions to provide a wider range of options in responding to people in need. It recognizes that although in some cases a traditional response is most appropriate there are limitations of these responses to address certain types of requests for assistance.

This initiative will develop response policies and protocols that use three additional approaches to 9-1-1 call response options:

- Co-responder response - Including both wellness/community response and public safety system agencies. These will partner together to coordinate a response most appropriate to the information available at the time of dispatch and the needs of the individuals requesting service.
- Non-traditional response - Calls where wellness system and community institutions can respond without the need for dispatching public safety personnel.
- Community Response- Community only response that is both dispatched and preventative.

ARI establishes and enhances wellness system response for the entire county, identifying and collaborating with key wellness departments to expand existing services or invest in new service models that can be deployed in response to requests that come into the 9-1-1 center or other contact points 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It also strengthens and institutionalizes community-based emergency response, building partnerships with key community organizations and supporting community infrastructure. Additionally, ARI will actively coordinate with public safety system partners across city and county government and engage the greater community ensuring

this new structure is clearly communicated across all stakeholders.

**Priority A: Co-response Model.** The existing co-response model will be greatly expanded to include a countywide 24x7 public wellness system (Social Services and Public Health) response. The current co-response model has limited hours and is only deployed when requested directly by police officers assigned to the call. This expanded response capability will add mobile units that can be dispatched by the Emergency Communications Center to respond with law enforcement or emergency medical services. For certain types of calls, these mobile public wellness response resources could be dispatched without law enforcement or emergency medical system responders where that can be done without risk to the staff or the person(s) needing assistance. Public wellness responders could be combined with community responders in some situations. The optimal response protocols would be co-designed with community.

**Priority B: Creating Community Based Response Capability.** Investing in the creation of a community-based response model disrupts pathways to incarceration, invests money and resources directly into our Ramsey County community, and empowers community members to have a larger role in keeping their neighborhoods safe. For this capability to be successful it needs to be codesigned with individual community members and community organizations who will have shared responsibility in design, implementation, and monitoring. This innovative response capability will allow for community members to aid each other whether that be through connection to resources, assisting in de-escalating conflict, or addressing code violations. Due to the nature of codesign the details of this response capability will be the result of a process that engages both system leadership and community members.

**Priority C: Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Enhancements.** ECC training and operations protocols will be redesigned, working in partnership with community and systems stakeholders, to include expanded dispatching options to connect callers to the most appropriate response options. This will include social workers embedded in the ECC to collaboratively identify appropriate responses as well as make referrals in cases where an immediate response is not necessary. ECC staff will be trained on new protocols to support new response options, build trust, and to elevate recognition of wellness, equity and trauma for improved decision making. A small number of ECC call takers will need to be added to the staff compliment to account for additional call processing time that will be required by expanded call screening protocols. Community will be involved in the process of developing new protocols and training for ECC employees.

### **Investment Area 2 Healing Streets \$2.8 million request**

Healing Streets is actively working to disrupt the cycle of violence by providing needed healing and wrap around services to communities and individuals who have been impacted by group and/or gun violence, including those who have caused harm. For this program to meet the needs in the community, expansions are required in both programming and staff support. The urgent areas of expansion include providing additional and intentional outreach to individuals who have caused harm, been harmed and their families, creating dedicated resource pool to be able to meet participants needs in the moment, implementing a fellowship program, creating a hospital-based program, and increasing staff roles dedicated to raising visibility and increasing impact.

#### **Priority A: Creating a dedicated resource pool**

Healing Streets will continue to enhance and create partnerships with other programs across the county to connect participants into existing services. However, due to the nature of this work it is vital that Healing Street have the assets to develop services that can be offered in the time of need without qualification barriers. This would include, but not be limited to, providing first and last month's rent to move a community member into safe housing, clothing, transportation assistance,

and other immediate needs.

**Priority B: Fellowship Program, Intentional Outreach, Hospital-Based Program**

A fellowship will be implemented for people who have caused harm which will include intensive training, and a paid stipend will allow individuals to develop new skills to lead a successful life. Intentional outreach to individuals who have caused harm will allow staff to build relationships with those individuals, understand their barriers to success and wellness, provide needed support, and give them alternatives to continuing to cause harm to the community. Critical to an effective outreach program will be the development of hospital programming designed to begin building relationships with people affected by gun violence shortly after the violent incident that resulted in their hospitalization.

**Priority C: Community Health Responders and Support Staff**

The new role of Community Health Responders will help clients access resources both in the community and within the Ramsey County services ecosystem. Additional staff is needed to help add planning capacity and providing behind the scenes support. Increasing staff capacity also allows for more community mediators to be hired, trained, and available to respond to violence in the community and also provides much needed job stability for community members hired into these roles.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Allocate up to \$16 million of the American Rescue Plan Act funds to support Violence Prevention initiatives through 2024, in accordance with federal guidance.
2. Authorize the County Manager to establish a grant account for Violence Prevention initiatives and transfer related expenses and revenue to this grant account.
3. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and contracts and amendments to agreements and contracts in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By:   
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Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board