



JOHN J. BENOIT
SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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County-City Partnership to Establish Mental Health Homeless Outreach Team in Palm Springs

PALM SPRINGS – Riverside County and Palm Springs will establish a team of mental health workers to provide services to the city’s homeless population under a partnership approved Tuesday by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

The mental health team will provide specialized services to homeless individuals in Palm Springs who suffer from a serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder. As necessary, the workers will make referrals to outpatient mental health, medical and substance use services. The full-time employees will be dedicated to and paid for by the City of Palm Springs.

“This agreement is an innovative approach to homelessness by bringing in mental health workers who can dedicate more time with these individuals and help them access needed services,” said Supervisor John J. Benoit. “I commend the City of Palm Springs for its financial commitment and focus on this very serious issue, and I look forward to the outcome of this partnership.”

Mental health staff will work closely with the Palm Springs Police Department, providing engagement and outreach services to homeless mentally ill individuals who come in contact with police officers. The staff will assist them with 911 calls involving homeless disturbances or violence that involves potentially mentally ill or substance use consumers. Mental health staff will also visit local homeless service providers and engage homeless individuals.

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“The Palm Springs Homelessness Task Force has been working closely with Riverside County to provide mental health services,” said Palm Springs Councilmember Ginny Foat, chair of the Palm Springs Homelessness Task Force. “We are absolutely delighted that Riverside County is partnering with us to solve this serious problem in our city. We thank Supervisor Benoit for his leadership on this issue and the Board of Supervisors for stepping up and joining the City of Palm Springs in this important endeavor.”

The Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health, formerly known as the Riverside County Department of Mental Health, will assign a behavioral health specialist II and mental health peer specialist to serve Palm Springs’ homeless population.

The goals of this partnership include: providing care and alternatives to those at risk of injury or death without appropriate mental health and substance use homeless services; reducing jail incarcerations and involuntary mental health treatment and hospitalizations, and linking hard-to-reach homeless individuals to community resources.

The annual cost of the agreement is up to \$165,000 per year, funded entirely by the City of Palm Springs. The Palm Springs City Council approved this agreement at their Oct. 21 meeting. The agreement will run until June 30, 2017.

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Supervisor John J. Benoit represents the eastern two-thirds of Riverside County on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. Stretching from Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs, south to the Salton Sea and east to Blythe and the Colorado River, the 4th District is the largest geographical district in the county.

Supervisor Benoit’s office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.