



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR  
June 9, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Jennifer Louis, Chief of Police

Subject: Contract No. 32300022 Amendment: Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. for Additional Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), Education and Counseling Services

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute an amendment to Contract No. 32300022 with Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. to provide additional CISM, Peer Support Team support, education, and counseling services, for a total amount not to exceed \$60,000, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$260,000, and extending the term through June 30, 2027.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The amendment will add \$60,000 to the contract to support continuation of these services through FY2027. Funds for this contract exist in our FY2027 General Fund baseline budget under budget code 011-71-701-801-0000-000-421-612990.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Providing public safety employees with ongoing Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), Peer Support Team development, education, and counseling services is a Strategic Plan Priority Project that advances the City's goal of creating a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared community. Funding this contract allows the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to prioritize employee well-being and stress tolerance.

In 2020, BPD contracted with the Psychological Services Group (PSG) for CISM and peer support training following the suicide of a police officer and the unexpected death of a second officer. BPD sought to provide immediate and ongoing support to employees to navigate the loss of our colleagues and provide a safety net for others struggling with the trauma experienced during a career in law enforcement. PSG was widely recognized for its experience in critical incident response and education through peer-to-peer defusing and facilitation of critical incident stress debriefings. Since implementation, they have responded to numerous critical incidents affecting BPD employees and have become an integrated component of the Department's wellness and post-incident response framework.

In 2021, with PSG guidance, BPD implemented its Peer Support Program and established a trained Peer Support Team. Approximately 24 personnel completed nationally standardized training through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. The team now provides 24/7 peer-based support in coordination with clinical professionals following critical incidents, employee injuries, or behavioral health crises. The program has increased engagement and reduced barriers to seeking help.

In 2022, PSG changed names and ownership and is now known as Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. (PSFCG). Due to the program's success and effectiveness and the need for continuity of care, BPD contracted with PSFCG through June 30, 2026, and waived competitive solicitation based on the need to provide continuity of care, ongoing CISM services, education, and training to our employees.

Over the years, through this contract, BPD employees have benefited from the services provided by PSFCG clinicians, who have extensive experience working with both law enforcement personnel and professional staff in public safety environments. Their familiarity with the unique stressors, culture, and operational demands of policing allows them to effectively support sworn employees, while also providing accessible and appropriate counseling services to non-sworn professional staff. This broad approach has allowed the Department to provide behavioral health support resources across the organization.

BPD has also benefited from collaboration with more than a dozen other Bay Area law enforcement agencies through PSFCG's quarterly regional training. These relationships provide valuable networking opportunities for the Peer Support Team to exchange information with other agencies, discuss how similar critical incidents were managed, and share effective practices for employee support and post-incident intervention. The regional network also provides an additional layer of peer support and collaboration during major incidents affecting participating agencies.

PSFCG also regularly meets with Peer Support Team leadership, providing guidance on program development and offering practical direction on managing critical incidents and identifying situations that may warrant debriefing or other intervention. Continued access to these resources is essential to supporting employee wellness and operational readiness.

## BACKGROUND

Law enforcement personnel are routinely exposed to traumatic incidents, critical events, and cumulative occupational stressors that can contribute to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicide risk.

National occupational health data consistently identifies suicide as a leading cause of death among active-duty law enforcement officers. CDC National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) analysis published in 2025 indicated that law enforcement

officers experience suicide rates estimated at approximately 19 to 27 per 100,000 officers annually, compared to approximately 14–15 per 100,000 in the general population.

Reports from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and CDC-based analyses indicate that in recent years, approximately 120 to 150 law enforcement officers die by suicide annually, while line-of-duty deaths range from approximately 110 to 150 officers per year. In multiple reporting cycles, officer suicides have equaled or exceeded line-of-duty fatalities.

Unlike line-of-duty deaths, which fluctuate based on operational conditions and external risk factors, suicide rates among law enforcement officers remain relatively stable over time. This consistency indicates that suicide risk is driven by cumulative occupational exposure rather than isolated incidents.

National research also identifies persistent barriers to early intervention and help-seeking behavior, including stigma, confidentiality concerns, and cultural expectations within law enforcement that discourage utilization of behavioral health services (U.S. DOJ COPS Office; SAMHSA First Responder Behavioral Health Reports).

Nationally, only an estimated 5% of law enforcement agencies have formalized peer support and suicide prevention programs (COPS Office report), placing agencies with structured programs in a small minority of departments actively addressing officer behavioral health through prevention and intervention frameworks.

Within this context, access to peer support, critical incident stress management, and clinically supported behavioral health services is widely recognized as a best practice for reducing risk exposure, improving early intervention, and supporting long-term employee wellness and operational readiness in high-stress public safety environments.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

This contract does not create environmental sustainability or climate change impacts.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Access to counseling and Critical Incident Stress Management services through the Public Safety Family Counseling Group supports employee wellness and operational readiness, which directly impacts the Department's ability to serve the community. Employees who are equipped to manage occupational stress are better prepared to engage the public professionally, exercise sound judgment, and apply de-escalation techniques during high-stress situations.

These services contribute to a more stable, resilient workforce capable of responding effectively to the community's most critical needs. When employees have timely access to behavioral health support, they are better able to manage the cumulative impacts of police work and maintain the level of calm, consistent service expected by the public.

This amendment ensures continuity of services while the Department evaluates alternative qualified vendors and long-term service options. Maintaining uninterrupted support during this review period will allow the Department to identify a cost-effective and sustainable long-term solution without disrupting existing employee wellness services.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED**

Declining to extend the contract or initiating competitive solicitation at this time would interrupt established mental health support services and leave BPD and its Peer Support Team without critical incident support from a trusted and experienced provider.

**CONTACT PERSON**

Samantha Speelman, Lieutenant, Police Department, (510) 981-5796.

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

CONTRACT NO. 32300022 AMENDMENT: PUBLIC SAFETY FAMILY COUNSELING GROUP INC. FOR ADDITIONAL CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND COUNSELING SERVICES

WHEREAS, Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. (PSFCG) has provided reliable Critical Incident Stress Management, education, and counseling services and assisted BPD with the selection and training of a robust Peer Support Team; and

WHEREAS, it is well known that those in law enforcement occupations experience a variety of adverse exposures to life-threatening situations, traumatic events, witnessing violence and assaults, and other cumulative critical incidents. These exposures can increase the potential for suicidal ideation. Studies have consistently shown that police officers are as likely, or more likely, to die by suicide than in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, PSFCG has provided critically needed Critical Incident Stress Management and crisis response services in response to a range of traumatic events experienced by Berkeley Police employees over recent years. These events include officer-involved shootings, homicides, child deaths, fatal vehicle collisions, unsuccessful lifesaving efforts, the suicide of a fellow employee, and employee deaths. These services remain essential to ensuring that members of the Berkeley Police Department have timely access to resources and support needed to process these incidents in a healthy and resilient manner; and

WHEREAS, with guidance from PSFCG staff, the Berkeley Police Department implemented a Peer Support Program, established a Peer Support Team, and trained 24 peer support officers using the national curriculum developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and supported by the International Association of Chiefs of Police; and

WHEREAS, the PSFCG has been highly impactful in normalizing structured discussion of post-traumatic events and supporting proactive intervention through licensed clinicians experienced in crisis response across numerous Bay Area law enforcement agencies. These clinicians are able to respond to the unpredictable and often after-hours nature of BPD Peer Support Team requests, ensuring timely access to support when it is most needed.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is authorized to execute an amendment to Contract No. 32300022 with Public Safety Family Counseling Group Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$60,000 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$260,000 to extend the term of the contract through June 30, 2027. Funding is budgeted in 011-71-701-801-0000-000-421-612990.

