



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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January 4, 2023

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair  
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FROM: Max Huntsman  
Inspector General

  
Chief Deputy, Inspector General on behalf of Inspector General Max Huntsman

SUBJECT: **SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ITEM NO. 14, AGENDA OF JULY 9, 2019)**

On July 9, 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion establishing a Family Assistance Program (Family Assistance) as a one-year pilot program administered by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and instructing the Office of Inspector General to report back quarterly in the first year and semi-annually thereafter. This is the Office of Inspector General's first report back for 2023.

## BACKGROUND

In July 2019, the Board established Family Assistance, aimed at improving compassionate communication and providing trauma-informed support to families of those who died following a fatal use of force by a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) employee or while in the custody of the Sheriff's Department.

On February 22, 2022, the Office of Inspector General, the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC), and the Office of Violence Prevention of the Department of Public Health (OVP), in consultation with other County departments, submitted to the Board a report including recommendations to make Family Assistance permanent, administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH), comprising a design and implementation

plan, an annual budget, a data tracking system, and a plan for quickly processing payments to affected families for burial assistance.<sup>1</sup>

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE STATUS**

In November 2022, the Chief Executive Office (CEO) hosted a meeting with County stakeholders regarding Family Assistance to address staffing and funding. With respect to staffing, the CEO expressed concerns with the development and implementation of three positions recommended in the Office of Inspector General's February 2022 report.<sup>2</sup> The CEO reported that subsequent to the Office of Inspector General's report an additional position was requested, thus requiring appropriate provisions for reporting and supervisions for four clinical positions within OVP, which could require that these positions reside outside of DPH. CEO noted that two of the four positions will directly support the Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner (DMEC). As noted in the Office of Inspector General's February 2022 report to the Board, staffing Family Assistance with mental health professionals will ensure that communications to grieving families are trauma-informed. OVP, DMEC, and CEO are committed to finding a staffing model that effectively meets this goal.

As part of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 budget request, the DPH submitted position requests for one Mental Health Clinical Supervisor, one Psychiatric Social Worker II (PSWII) position, and two PSWII positions to support DMEC. DMEC has included in its FY 2023-2024 budget a request for a Coroner Investigator to support Family Assistance. These budget requests are being evaluated by CEO for allocation consideration during the budget process.

With respect to current funding, the CEO reported that ongoing funding for Family Assistance was allocated to OVP in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Final Adopted Budget. Ongoing funding totaling \$1,530,000 was allocated for Family Assistance services including burial assistance and staffing for navigation assistance of available County services, including mental health resources. Out of the total budget, \$375,000 in funding

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<sup>1</sup> [Office of Inspector General's Semi-Annual Report on Implementation of the Family Assistance Program and Report Back on Permanent Support for Families Affected by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department: Identifying Sustainable Funding for and Streamlining the Family Assistance Program.](#)

<sup>2</sup> As discussed in the Office of Inspector General's February 2022 report, Los Angeles County Civil Service Rule 5 designates CEO Classification and Compensation with providing final staffing recommendations, including levels, to the Board. Among other things, CEO Classification and Compensation reviews the appropriateness of a classification in a department, reporting relationships, MOU requirements with unions, span of control, and other considerations.

is available for burial expenses. To allow sufficient time for DPH to properly staff the program, DMH is currently administering burial assistance services, providing mental health services to families, and connecting families to available services. DMH is working with DPH to transition the work to DPH, at which time, OVP will assume the responsibility for the distribution of funds for burial services to the affected families.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE SERVICE DATA**

Family Assistance managed by DMH continues to offer significant mental health services and financial assistance to bereaved families. Data available to the Office of Inspector General reflects that from July 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, DMH engaged the families of 13 individuals who died following a fatal use of force by a Sheriff's Department employee or while in the custody of the Sheriff's Department. Of the 13 families, 8 accepted services and assistance from DMH's Family Assistance Advocate while 4 families could not be reached due to a lack of next-of-kin information. One family declined assistance. DMH is currently working with DMEC on obtaining the information to notify the next-of-kin for these 4 families and to offer Family Assistance services. Burial expenses were distributed to 4 of the 13 families, with expenses ranging from \$1,919 to \$7,500, totaling a sum of approximately \$23,576 for the period. Additionally, there are 4 families who have accepted financial assistance who are pending and expected to be processed once family obtains the proper documentation.

The Office of Inspector General will continue to monitor Family Assistance and report back semi-annually.

MH:bo

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