

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

January 24, 2023

Page 1 of 2

**SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF PANIC BUTTONS FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS**

This informal report is in response to a December 6, 2022, request for information on the acquisition of panic buttons for childcare providers, possibly using funds from the Crime Control and Prevention District (CCPD).

Permissible Uses of CCPD Funds

Per Title 11 Chapter 363 of the Texas Local Government Code, CCPD “may finance all the costs of a crime control and crime prevention program, including the costs for personnel, administration, expansion, enhancement, and capital expenditures.” (Sec. 363.151). Section 363.151(c) further details similar permitted programming for “community-related crime prevention strategies.” Any proposed program would be subject to City Attorney review for determination.

Alternative Funding Source: Asset Forfeiture Funds

Historically, CCPD has been used to fund community-based crime prevention programs with measurable outcomes on a recurring basis. Although this request is strictly not about a crime prevention program, but rather more about a response to service requests, we believe that it closely aligns with the safety, wellness, and resiliency themes associated with our use of Asset Forfeiture funds.

Costs for Panic Buttons at Childcare Facilities

The Fort Worth Police Department has requested pricing from local security companies regarding the installation and monitoring of panic buttons in order to determine the feasibility and structure of a program. At the time of this report, pricing analysis was not available.

The Fort Worth Police Department has also received information that there are an estimated 270 licensed childcare providers operating in Fort Worth. This information will be used to determine the scope, costs, and ongoing operational expenses in determining the feasibility of such a program. The cost to establish and maintain contracts with these agencies will also be determined.

Alternatives to Panic Buttons for Childcare Providers

- Childcare Facilities Versus Schools – With the availability of funding for schools to deploy panic buttons -- i.e. Silent Panic Alarm Technology (SPAT) grant, Texas Education Agency (TEA) School Safety and Security Grant, etc. – ensuring that licensed childcare facilities are covered has become a valid concern. Childcare facilities do not have the same access to funding through the state level.
- Location Alerts – The Fort Worth Police Department General Orders allow for location alerts that permit specified locations and/or phone numbers to be programmed into police systems to provide an alert to a dispatcher coordinating with responding officers. By programming in an alert, responding officers can coordinate communication with the Department, with those in the surrounding community, and at the identified location.
- Community Notification Systems – There are various emerging technology systems that allow for community notifications to go out, similar to “Fort Worth Texas Alerts”. These systems have varied capabilities and help to notify those in specific groups and geographic areas of threats or incidents in progress through phone notifications. The Fort Worth Police Department utilizes a similar system, known as Everbridge, that is deployed in a very limited capacity. The expansion of this system, or of a similar product, would need to be evaluated for cost comparison to currently available methods.

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****January 24, 2023**

Page 2 of 2

SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF PANIC BUTTONS FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Child Care Associates has a partnership with Save the Children, an international NGO that includes in its U.S. portfolio preparedness for childcare programs. They have a new training on “people disasters” and helping childcare programs think through threat scenarios. Child Care Associates would like Fort Worth to be a “model community” for a case study on various, coordinated efforts to improve childcare capacity and response to threats and Kara Waddell has approached Save the Children about this possibility. This would be a great opportunity to feature ideas including simple annual procedures such as knowing your neighborhood beat cop and securing a few local numbers.

Recommendations

If determined to be feasible, staff recommends reimbursing eligible agencies for initial installation cost of panic alarms to childcare facilities needing assistance or requesting the service through our Asset Forfeiture funds. Ongoing yearly subscription costs would be borne by the childcare provider. This would be a one-time cost to help childcare facilities to obtain panic alarms to allow for a priority 1 response when incidents occur at these locations. Eligibility requirements would be informed by recommendations from Child Care Associates and serve to prioritize resources toward areas of greatest need. Additional vendor research may yield pricing options and discounted rates to further inform this program.

We seek to protect the safety of our children, our most vulnerable population, regardless of them being in school or in a childcare facility. We believe that the Fort Worth Police Department has an opportunity to meet this need.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact Executive Assistant Chief Robert Alldredge at 817-392-4131 or robert.alldredge@fortworthtexas.gov.

**David Cooke
City Manager**