



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

January 6, 2026

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SUBJECT: INSTALLATION OF PANIC ALARMS IN LOCAL YMCA'S

This informal report is in response to a December 6, 2025 request for information regarding the feasibility of installing priority police panic buttons like those added to local Fort Worth childcare facilities that were part of a Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD) and Child Care Associates (CCA) collaborative project.

History of Panic Alarm Installations at Fort Worth Child Care Facilities

In October of 2022 an incident occurred at a Fort Worth childcare facility that resulted in a delayed police response and highlighted a need for panic alarm buttons at childcare facilities that do not have them. In the case of an emergency, a panic alarm button triggers a priority police response. At the time, there were an estimated 270 licensed childcare providers operating in Fort Worth, most were individual, privately owned businesses, of which many did not have a panic alarm button at their facility.

With the availability of funding for schools to deploy panic alarm 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 was a valid concern. Childcare facilities do not have the same access to funding through the state level. Realizing this gap and opportunity to enhance the safety of our children and community, a collaborative project between CCA and the FWPD was developed.

The plan called for Crime Control and Prevention District (CCPD) funding to cover the cost to install a panic alarm button at childcare facilities that did not have them and introduce them to their Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO) who would provide training on the use of the panic alarm button and general safety guidelines. This promotes both safety and community/police relationships. Once installed, it was the responsibility of the facility to have and maintain security services with their own provider. It was determined the greatest need was with private businesses that were not part of a larger business organization, which commonly have greater access to funding resources. The plan was implemented in 2023 and to date, 11 panic alarm button installs have occurred with 2 more scheduled to be completed in early 2026.

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.

Feasibility of Panic Alarm Installations at YMCA's

YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) is a worldwide organization, global network of volunteer-led associations working in over 120 countries and territories, serving millions of people with programs focused on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. It's one of the largest non-profits globally, with its international body headquartered in Switzerland.

Local YMCAs typically secure funding for security measures through the following avenues:

- **Federal Grants:** The YMCA of the USA leverages approximately \$1.5 billion in grants annually, including over \$600 million in government grants. One relevant federal source is the Department of



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Homeland Security's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) (administered by FEMA), which provides funding for "target hardening and other physical security enhancements" to high-risk nonprofit organizations.

- **State and Local Grants:** Many states and local governments offer grants for security improvements, especially those related to school safety.
 - For example, Texas established the [Silent Panic Alert Technology \(SPAT\) Grant Program](#), which funds silent alarms in public schools.
 - YMCAs that operate childcare or youth programs in partnership with schools might be eligible for these types of state-specific grants.
- **Private Foundations and Corporations:** Charitable organizations and private foundations often fund community safety and security initiatives. The YMCA can apply for grants from these sources for facility upgrades, equipment, and staff training related to safety.
- **Specific Vendor Programs:** Security providers sometimes list available grants or offer resources to help organizations find relevant funding. Some vendors even design specific physical panic button solutions for YMCAs, such as for pool areas where smartphones might be inaccessible.

YMCAs also use security systems, including surveillance cameras and controlled access, as part of their overall safety measures to protect members and property. Additionally, YMCA employees receive security and safety training with a focus on child safety, which may not occur with some of the smaller privately owned childcare facilities.

Most of the childcare facilities are smaller, more localized organizations without significant funding resources but with significant risks to the safety of children within our communities. This was a factor in deciding to use CCPD funds to address this gap and safety need. Additionally, many of these smaller, privately owned facilities have very limited interaction with their local police officers, particularly their NPO's. There are (10) YMCA facilities throughout Fort Worth, all of which frequently host various community events including several with local police.

Findings

The purpose of the collaborative project between CCA and FWPD to install panic alarm buttons at local childcare facilities was to fill a gap in safety for children and promote police/community relationships at facilities without access to other funding resources. Because YMCAs have greater access to resources for providing enhanced safety measures, Fort Worth Police Department would not generally support or recommend using CCPD funding for this purpose.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact Deputy Chief Buck Wheeler at 817-392-4431 or buck.wheeler@fortworthtexas.gov.

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