



4/8/2025

The Honorable William O'Brien
Chair, House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety
Rhode Island General Assembly

Re: Support for H5076, Department of Public Safety Budget

Chair O'Brien and Members of the Committee,

Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI) would like to thank the committee for your investment last year of \$400,000 for FSRI's child trauma-focused GO TEAM® police partnerships. This funding not only supported our long-standing, highly successful partnerships with:

- Rhode Island State Police
- Providence Police Department
- Pawtucket Police Department
- Central Falls Police Department
- Woonsocket Police Department

It also made it possible for us to launch new GO TEAMS® with:

- Newport Police Department
- Barrington Police Department

In total, nearly 900 Rhode Island children exposed to violence and other traumas received critical, on-scene support as a result.

We would like to thank Governor McKee and the leadership of Rhode Island Public Safety Department, including Colonel Weaver, for continuing this funding for the GO TEAM® in the proposed FY26 state budget. A portion of this funding will also be used to support new GO TEAM® partnerships with:

- Jamestown Police Department
- East Providence Police Department
- Middletown Police Department (focused on officer/officer family wellness)
- RIDCYF Child Protective Services (supporting collaborative response with Police Departments)
- An expansion of our partnership with the Central Falls Police and School Departments.

What is the GO TEAM®?

For 20 years, FSRI has operated the GO TEAM® in partnership with Rhode Island police departments across the state, which currently includes the seven departments noted above. A nationally recognized best practice endorsed by both the Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration's (SAMHSA) National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, GO TEAM® trauma experts co-respond with police on-scene to children who are victims of violence and other traumas.



FSRI's GO TEAM® is the only 24/7/365 co-response program in Rhode Island that is focused on children who have experienced trauma. GO TEAM® police liaisons ride-along with law enforcement on patrol, providing immediate, on-scene crisis intervention, compassionate support, language and emergency basic needs assistance, and safety planning to address the immediate effects of child trauma exposure. Then, through follow-up, the liaisons continue to provide advocacy, linkage to evidence-based trauma treatment and victim-focused benefits like the RI Crime Victim Compensation Program, support from RIDCYF, and ongoing assistance navigating the complex criminal justice system for the whole family.

The GO TEAM® co-responds most often to calls involving:

- Suspected abuse or neglect of children and RIDCYF child removals
- Domestic/interpersonal violence, stalking, restraining order violations
- Incidents when parents are likely to be arrested with children on scene
- Homicides or other violent crimes witnessed by children
- Child deaths and death notifications
- Youth sex trafficking, runaways, waywards
- Narcotics/gun raids when children are likely to be present
- Suicides and the children left behind
- Incidents of school violence
- Children in behavioral health crisis

Outcomes:

- Increased trust and positive relationships between law enforcement and community members
- Greater engagement of victims in the criminal justice process
- Reduction of repeat calls to the same household and acts of retribution
- Reduction of youth hospitalizations and juvenile justice involvement
- Reduction in child abuse and re-victimization
- Improved healthy family functioning at home and increased attendance at school
- High effectiveness ratings reported by law enforcement
- High satisfaction ratings reported by families served

FSRI is also in the process of replicating GO TEAM® in cities across the country through its SAMHSA/NCTSN supported National Center for Trauma-Informed Policing, aimed at disseminating this best practice co-response model while also training law enforcement on Understanding and Responding to Child Trauma. It is expected that more than 2,000 officers will be trained over the coming year.

We have the full support of all partnering police chiefs and the RI State Police superintendent (a sampling of Letters of Support are attached).

Funding:



The \$400,000 that is included in the Governor's proposed budget will allow the continuation of the GO TEAM® with the police departments noted previously, without interruption, the expansion of one, and the addition of four new partnerships across the state

FSRI also commits to continue to secure the majority of the GO TEAM® funding from additional sources including local jurisdictions, federal agencies, private foundations, and individual donors.

GO TEAM® Victim Impact Statement:

A child victim following GO TEAM® response and FSRI evidence-based child trauma-treatment: "I was so scared I felt like I couldn't go outside. I felt like I wanted to go to a new home. I didn't want to live in my house anymore. I felt scared to go onto the street. I felt like there were a lot of bad people and they wanted to get me. I felt like I didn't want to play outside ever. My parents told me I was going to therapy to talk about it. I felt like therapy was going to be strange. I felt nervous to talk to someone about what happened. She helped me learn how to be calm and to talk to my parents when I was scared. She played with me and taught me to do spaghetti. For the last three weeks I've slept in my own bed all by myself without having to be with my mom. And now I go outside with my cousins and my brother and it's not so scary. Now I don't get that scared anymore because instead of not thinking about it I talk about it."

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Candace Johndrow

Candace Johndrow
Vice President of Hope

Attachments: Police Chief Letters of Support



CENTRAL FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

160 Illinois Street
Central Falls, Rhode Island 02863
(401) 727-7411 F AX (401) 727-7417

April 4, 2025

The Honorable William O'Brien
Chair, House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety
Rhode Island General Assembly

Chair O'Brien and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment **in support of the \$400,000 in funding for the Go Team®** included in H5076, the Governor's FY26 proposed budget for the Department of Public Safety, and thank you for the inclusion of \$400,000 in last year's budget as well.

For 20 years, FSRI has partnered with police departments across Rhode Island to provide 24/7/365 joint response for victims of crime, with a special focus on children exposed to traumatic events. Through this innovative partnership, an FSRI police liaison rides along on patrol with police officers, responding on-scene to provide crisis response and stabilization to decrease the impact of trauma and keep victims supported and engaged throughout the investigative and court process. The joint response model works well to reduce the risk of re-victimization and the after effects of trauma exposure and supports community/police relations.

The partnerships serves hundreds of victims of crime every year, with a special focus on the most vulnerable in our communities - children. This partnership helps our officers do their jobs while feeling confident victims are being well taken care of during and immediately following their victimization. We can always count on the Go Team® to show up for victims, for the officers, and for our community.

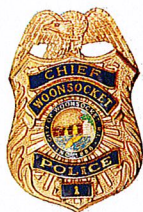
The Go Team® has been recognized as a best practice locally, regionally, and nationally; has won several grants, awards, and special designations over the years; and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from victims served. This budget allocation will allow the program to continue to support victims of crime, and it is paramount to our communities that these funds are included as requested.

The demonstrated success that the GO Team® has brought to Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, Newport, and Barrington, as well as the statewide response through the State Police partnership, has proven the importance of continuing to support and expand this program.

I strongly support the inclusion of the Go Team® in the Department of Public Safety Budget. Please contact me if I can be of assistance or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

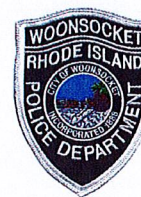

Colonel Anthony J. Roberson
Chief of Police



Thomas F. Oates III
Chief of Police

Woonsocket Police Department

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4/2/2025

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Chair, House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety
Rhode Island General Assembly

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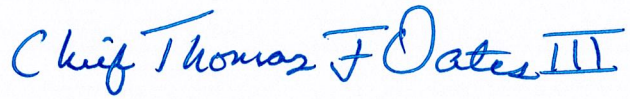
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chief Thomas F. Oates III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Chief Thomas F. Oates III
Woonsocket Police Department