



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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### REPORT

**Department:** Emergency Management and Regional Security

**Report Title:** EMRS' Report to Joint Health and Hospitals - Criminal Justice Committee

**Report Period:** N/A

**Summary:** The Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security submits the following report in response to Resolution 22-0618:

The Cook County Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security (EMRS) enhances the safety and security of Cook County and its residents by working to build capacity to prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to and recover from all incidents, both human-caused and natural. EMRS is responsible for coordinating the County's response to a large-scale emergency or disaster. On a day-to-day basis, EMRS supports municipalities by providing guidance and coordinating resources as needed, including to suburban law enforcement partners.

As EMRS is not a law enforcement entity, the Department has limited authority and ability to assist with responding to violence and crime specifically. If local law enforcement requests assistance from EMRS, it would typically be in the form of equipment requests such as light towers and jersey barriers. In a rapidly evolving and complex incident, such as an active shooter scenario, local law enforcement may request the use of EMRS' Unified Command Post/Vehicle, which is equipped with technology allowing for enhanced incident coordination.

EMRS maintains strong relationships with municipal law enforcement partners, which may potentially be leveraged to support violence prevention programs. Additionally, EMRS has also served as the County fiscal agent of Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program funds, which provides federal funding for criminal justice projects, including violence prevention programs. Over the past several years, EMRS made a concerted effort to increase the awards to community-based organizations working with justice-impacted populations, including a pre-apprentice carpentry program with the Chicagoland Prison Outreach, reentry programming with the Haymarket Center, and Leave No Veterans Behind. Going forward, the Justice Advisory Council will assume responsibility for the allocation of JAG funds (from FY21 onward).

EMRS' authorities and funding sources limit its responsibilities and activities. For example, approximately 97% of EMRS funding comes from the Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program, which assists high-threat, high-density Urban Areas in efforts to build and sustain the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. Eligible costs under the UASI program must have a direct nexus to counterterrorism and be used to fill a gap in one of thirty-two Core Capabilities as defined by the National Preparedness Goal. Projects addressing municipal violent crime and carjackings specifically would be ineligible under UASI, unless such a project could demonstrate a clear link to counterterrorism.

Further narrowing the eligibility aperture for UASI programs are state and federal funding priorities for counter-terrorism dollars. Federal UASI funding priorities are set in the annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) which prescribes priority funding areas and assigns corresponding percentages that must be met to obtain funding. The 2021 Homeland Security Grant Program NOFO (of which UASI is a component) prescribed the following priorities:

- Enhancing cybersecurity - 7.5 percent of total award
- Enhancing the protection of soft targets/crowded places - 5 percent of total award
- Enhancing information and intelligence sharing and analysis, and cooperation with federal agencies - 5 percent of total award
- Combating domestic violent extremism - 7.5 percent of total award
- Addressing emergent threats (e.g., transnational criminal organizations, unmanned aircraft systems, weapons of mass destruction, etc.) - 5 percent of total award

Similarly, the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) recently issued its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan (“Vision 2025”) which identifies seven homeland security goals to be addressed via Homeland Security Grant investments over the next four years:

- Enhancing Cybersecurity Capabilities
- Intelligence/Information Sharing
- Homeland Security Coordination and Communications
- Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources
- Prevention of Domestic Terrorism/Targeted Violence
- All Hazard Preparedness
- Statewide Mutual Aid

By identifying these goals, the ITTF’s strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework to guide, organize, and unify homeland security efforts in the State of Illinois.

With this criterion in mind, EMRS has proposed the creation of a Whole Community Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Academy, which would provide joint training to community and law enforcement members to equip them with the knowledge and skills to understand and manage the impacts that implicit biases have on interactions. Additionally, these trainings would educate participants on the overt signs of radicalization and the tools available to counter such threats. The proposed training program would increase community members’ confidence in sharing critical information with police to help reduce incidents of targeted violence while simultaneously encouraging the development of trusting relationships between communities and law enforcement. EMRS applied for 2021 Department of Homeland Security, Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) funding in the amount of \$746,685.76 but did not receive an award. EMRS intends to apply for additional TVP funding for this program and is currently assessing the eligibility of UASI funds to support a pilot of this program.

In conclusion, EMRS has a limited role in responding to violent crime and carjackings, aside from providing assistance at the request of individual jurisdictions as addressed above. EMRS may leverage its grant funding to support violence prevention activities where a nexus to terrorism exists. Finally, EMRS can facilitate connections to municipal law enforcement partners to support violence prevention programs.

EMRS’ representatives for the virtual joint committee meeting scheduled for January 19, 2022, are listed below.

William Barnes, Executive Director

Kimberly Hayward Buys, Chief Deputy Director  
Lydia L. Watts, Deputy Director of Training