

WEEKLY POLICY SUMMARY:

Law Enforcement Community Support for Mental Health Challenges

May 6, 2019

Praise For Law Enforcement's Handling Of Mental Health Challenges

1. [Patch](#): The Putnam County, New York Sheriff's Department was honored at a ceremony on May 1st to kick off May's Mental Health Awareness month. Sgt. Keith Blessing, Kent Police Chief Kevin Owens, and Pastor Andrew Columbia of Carmel were recognized for starting the Peer to Peer program in Putnam County for all law enforcement, according to a release from the sheriff's department.

Sgt. Keith Blessing, Kent Police Chief Kevin Owens, and Pastor Andrew Columbia of Carmel receiving their certificates of recognition.

a. [Mid Hudson News](#): The Peer to Peer program is a "warm line" operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week that was originally meant to assist veterans with thoughts of suicide. The program is now being expanded to the Kent Police headquarters, where 20 enrollees will train to talk to citizens and law enforcement about preventing suicide.

2. [Post Independent](#): Larimer County, Colorado officials in law enforcement, health, and government came together at a behavioral and mental health symposium to address mental health gaps in their community. Due to the symposium outlining the importance of mental health, voters approved a ballot issue in November 2018 with 61 percent of the vote authorizing 0.25 percent sales and use tax for behavioral health services. The funds will be used to develop a behavioral or mental health facility in town, among other services. The Board of County Commissioners is interested in partnering with law enforcement to develop a plan for the mental health facility.

3. [Mercury News](#): County officials in Santa Clara, California are expanding their "mobile mental health teams," squads of on-call clinicians who staff a hotline through which they can triage psychiatric emergencies and "provide services in the community including crisis screening, intervention, de-escalation services, and connect or refer people to community resources." The program was initially launched to support county law enforcement agencies seeking help in dealing with mental health emergencies that prompted 911 calls and a police response. Local police agencies in Santa Clara have also been instituting crisis intervention training, which has been helpful for the increasing amount of police calls which involve a mental-health emergency.

- a. [NAMI Santa Clara](#): The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in Santa Clara, California, runs the mobile mental health teams (also known as the Mobile Crisis Response Team), and provides multiple other types of crisis and emergency support. These include a suicide hotline and a resource guide for warning signs of a mental health emergency and how to respond.
4. [Echo Journal](#): Officials and community leaders from Crow Wing County, Minnesota, are planning to participate in the “Good for Business: A Community Conversation About Employee Mental Well-Being” Conference on May 9th. The conference will feature Crow Wing County Sheriff Scott Goddard, who will open the conference with a presentation about law enforcement experiences regarding mental health. A panel discussion of those responding to mental health emergencies will follow Goddard's talk.

Reliance On Law Enforcement For Mental Health Needs

5. [Al.com](#): Jeremy Blair, CEO at Wellstone Behavioral Health, actively advocates for the Alabama Department of Mental Health to create a walk-in clinic for those who struggle with mental health issues. Blair specifically cited the need of giving law enforcement an alternative to bringing someone suffering from a mental illness to jail as a reason for the clinic. “What if we had a crisis center that law enforcement could bring that person to or the public could bring somebody to who was in a crisis?” Blair asked. “Operates 24/7. That’s what we’re missing. If you think about on the physical health side, we’ve invested tons of resources in walk-in clinics, emergency rooms, primary care, etc. that’s everywhere. American Family Care out of Birmingham kind of pioneered that whole mode.”
6. [Longview News-Journal](#): Law enforcement officials in the greater Houston, Texas, area announced the expansion of a program to keep low-level misdemeanor offenders with mental health problems out of jail following the success of a new facility that resulted in diverting more than 1,000 people from incarceration and saving taxpayers \$9 million. “When individuals are brought here by police, it not only saves lots of money at the jail, in the courts, but we get people appropriate treatment,” said Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg.
7. [WSAV](#): The Chatham County, Georgia’s Sheriff’s Office recently held a mental health and criminal justice workshop to discuss the growing number of nonviolent offenders who are battling mental illnesses. Sheriff John Wilcher said that it costs millions of dollars a year, around \$180,000 a day, to keep offenders who are battling mental illness in his jail. He said he is working with lawmakers to open a facility specifically for these offenders to get treatment. In light of this, officials in Chatham County have decided to create a new mental health facility for nonviolent offenders. The groundbreaking for the new facility reportedly will be held on May 29.
 - a. [Video](#) detailing the new facility.

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