

WEEKLY POLICY SUMMARY:

Law Enforcement Community Support for Mental Health Challenges

May 13, 2019

Praise For Law Enforcement's Handling Of Mental Health Challenges

1. [Abilene Reporter News](#): A new jail navigator program is helping people suffering from mental health crises in Taylor County, Texas. "People who have mental health issues don't need to be put in jail," said Taylor County Sheriff Ricky Bishop during a May 6 news conference about the new initiative. Since April 1, Taylor County's new jail navigator Krysten Ughanze has been working with law enforcement and jail staff to identify prisoners in need of mental health services. Of the more than 110 prisoners Ughanze met with in April, at least 30 of them were referred to the Taylor County Detention Center's mental health clinic. Taylor County's jail navigator initiative is the result of a multi-agency Behavioral Advisory Team that includes the City of Abilene, Taylor County, and the Betty Hardwick Center.
 - a. [Abilene Reporter News](#): The jail navigator is a mental health services professional who meets with and evaluates inmates upon their request, or upon referral by family members or jail staff.
 - b. [Video](#) detailing Taylor County's new jail navigator program.
2. [Enid News](#): The Sheriff's Office in Garfield County, Oklahoma, is preparing to train law enforcement officers across the state in handling mental illness situations. Garfield County Acting Sheriff Jody Helm said officers and deputies have spent the week in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, learning the best way to handle contact with mentally ill individuals. Tulsa Police Department Sergeant Mark Ohnesorge, a CIT trainer, said nearly 100 officers receive CIT training each year. The CIT program partners police officers and the community together with officers participating in a five-day, 40-hour training program. The training includes panel discussions and classes taught by psychiatrists, substance abuse specialists, social workers, other police officers and mental health experts.



Garfield County Sheriff's Office Deputy Mark Vargas participating in a CIT program training exercise.

3. [Waxahachie Daily Light](#): Waxahachie, Texas Police Sergeant Josh Oliver is one of five Waxahachie Police Department officers to participate in the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement's mental health officer certification program. "The police department is the first place a family is going to turn to get some help. I probably use my training twice a week," said Sgt. Oliver. The 40-hour, weeklong course trains officers to handle situations in the field involving a mentally ill person or a person in crisis. Waxahachie Police Chief Wade Goolsby was recently approved by the Waxahachie City Council to pursue a \$26,000 North Central Texas Council of Governments grant for financial assistance to implement the program throughout the department. "We're completely changing the way we approach people in crisis. Before, we looked at individuals in crisis as someone who is dangerous. Now we're teaching officers that they're a person in need of help," said Sgt. Oliver.



Waxahachie Police Department Officer Kevin Wright is the latest to become a certified mental health officer in the Waxahachie Police Department.

Reliance On Law Enforcement For Mental Health Needs

4. [Washington Post](#): Transportation of mentally ill patients in Virginia will soon be done by a private security firm located in Richmond, Virginia. The Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services plans to award a \$7 million, two-year contract to private security firm G4S to provide transportation for patients who are involuntarily hospitalized. This new approach is intended to assist law enforcement responding to mental health crisis situations.

5. [NBC Washington](#): Fairfax County, Virginia has implemented a Mental Health Docket, which aims to put mentally ill people into treatment centers rather than jail. Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh said, "Jail is no place for a person with mental illness. Treatment is the appropriate option when it comes to mentally ill people." Since the Mental Health Docket pilot program began in August 2018, at least 180 people have been placed in treatment centers instead of jail. The program will be fully launched in Fairfax County on July 1, 2019.
 - a. [Video](#) detailing Fairfax County's Mental Health Docket.

6. [Street Roots News](#): Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare in Multnomah County, Oregon has created Project Respond, a program that sends teams of mental health professionals to respond to mental health emergencies. The program is intended to help law enforcement with responding to mental health crisis situations. The Project Respond team performs on-site mental health assessments and, if an individual presents an imminent danger to themselves or others, can issue an involuntary hold and have them transported to a hospital for psychiatric evaluation. Otherwise, the team can work with the individual on a voluntary basis to help them manage their mental illness while remaining in the community.

7. [The Free Press](#): Horizon Homes, a mental health center in South Central, Minnesota used for short-term mental health situations, will soon expand its 24/7 mobile crisis team program and adding more mental health beds to the 10-county region it serves. "The goal is really to get them in a place where they can return back to the community safely and not be in crisis anymore," said Ricki Pribyl, Horizon Homes' Clinical Director. Mankato Department of Public Safety Commander Matt DuRose said Horizon Homes is "invaluable" and a major resource for law enforcement responding to situations involving mental health issues. In April 2019, Horizon Homes responded to at least 80 such cases. As of April, the center's residential services admitted 177 cases, putting Horizon Homes on track to exceed its 400 to 500 average for annual patients.



Horizon Homes staff showing improvements to be made by the expansion to local officials.

8. [Minnesota Public Radio](#): A new program in St. Cloud, Minnesota through CentraCare Health aims to help people with mental health issues who frequently land in jail or hospital emergency rooms, and is already showing promise of reducing costly jail and emergency room visits for people dealing with repeated mental illness or addiction crises. St. Cloud Police Commander James Steve said his officers are called to assist people dealing with a mental health crisis approximately five times per day, but often do not have the necessary tools at their disposal to help them adequately respond. Stearns County officials estimate that nearly two-thirds of incarcerated individuals have a mental illness.

a. [Minnesota Public Radio](#): As a result of the success of the CentraCare Health program, law enforcement officials from Stearns County, Minnesota and the St. Cloud, Minnesota Veterans Association met with CentraCare Health to form an action team of police, human services, probation agents and mental health workers. CentraCare Health medical and mental health professionals see incarcerated patients for physical health problems, such as hypertension and diabetes, and can started them on treatment for mental health problems while in custody.



CentraCare Health's Coordinated & Correctional Care Director Katy Kirchner talking about the success of the program.

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There is no recent activity.