



Framework for Law Enforcement Responses to People With Mental Health Needs

Framework for Law Enforcement Responses to People With Mental Health Needs

As law enforcement officers and agencies respond to an increasing number of calls for individuals experiencing mental health and emotional crises, they continue to become more aware of a need for increased and improved training and response protocols. Agencies that recognize that need, but want a roadmap of where to start, can find help in [*Police-Mental Health Collaborations: A Framework for Implementing Effective Law Enforcement Responses for People Who Have Mental Health Needs*](#), a new online publication from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center.



Produced with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the framework is based on six key questions:

1. Is our leadership committed?
2. Do we have clear policies and procedures to respond to people who have mental health needs?
3. Do we provide staff with quality mental health and stabilization training?
4. Does the community have a full array of mental health services and supports for people who have mental health needs?
5. Do we collect and analyze data to measure the police-mental health collaborations (PMHCs) against the four key outcomes?
6. Do we have a formal and ongoing process for reviewing and improving performance?

Each question addresses “why it matters and what it looks like,” with an illustrative case study. According to Terence Lynn, Deputy Division Director, Law Enforcement, at the CSG Justice Center, the framework helps communities build more comprehensive efforts and adapt them to the scale needed for that jurisdiction with a focus on four key outcomes that allow agencies to see if their efforts are succeeding:

- Increased connections to resources.
- Reduced repeat encounters with law enforcement.
- Minimized arrests.
- Reduced use of force in encounters with people who have mental health needs.

“It allows agencies to assess what they’ve implemented and look for areas that need improvement. The Framework also helps with developing new training and addressing

specific issues,” Lynn says. “Law enforcement and community health agencies tend to act as stand-alone entities, and they’re interacting with the same individuals and issues. The Framework helps agencies that may not even know each other exists begin a conversation about forging partnerships so that everybody benefits.”

He adds that in addition to providing a starting point for agencies, it also allows those who have some efforts in place to assess what they’re doing and where they’re going. Several of those agencies helped with the development of the framework content, contributing feedback to the case studies featured after each section.

Lynn explains that the CSG Justice Center has established a network of law enforcement and mental health learning sites that work on improving responses to individuals experiencing mental and emotional crises. These learning sites come from a variety of geographical and demographical locations, with some of them contributing case studies to the framework. (The agencies included in the case studies are in Los Angeles, Houston, Tucson, Arlington (Mass.), Salt Lake City and the University of Florida.)

Lynn says now that the Framework has been released, the next steps call for piloting its use with several communities, then generating data to show its usefulness. The CSG Justice Center also wants to promote it to the field through webinars and conferencing.

“We’ll be doing a presentation at the International Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference in October, in partnership with BJA, to discuss the framework and its positive outcomes and benefits. We’ll be doing that at other national conferences and law enforcement behavioral health conferences as well,” Lynn says. “And there’s just being engaged in conversation with learning sites and hearing about what’s going on in the field. Our goal is to help them understand how data can help determine if they’re moving the needle and having a positive impact, and using that information to help inform their decision-making. They’re excited that the framework is in existence, and I think it will be a valuable source of information to help their efforts.”

Download *Police-Mental Health Collaborations: A Framework for Implementing Effective Law Enforcement Responses for People Who Have Mental Health Needs* [here](#).

Article photo: iStock.com/Yuri_Arcurs