

POLICE-MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATION PROGRAMS:



CHECKLIST FOR COUNTY AND CITY LEADERS

WHY PRIORITIZE SPECIALIZED POLICE RESPONSE PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES?

Law enforcement responses to people with mental illnesses are among the most complex and time-consuming calls for officers, threaten the safety of officers and residents alike, and have the potential for tragic outcomes. And when people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders who could be safely treated in the community are incarcerated, the impact on their lives is staggering.

The research is clear: People with mental illnesses who are referred to behavioral health treatment by law enforcement officers experience fewer subsequent contacts with the criminal justice system than those who were not referred to treatment. Law enforcement and behavioral health agency leaders across the country are increasingly partnering to develop Police-Mental Health Collaboration (PMHC) programs as part of a comprehensive approach to improve outcomes for this population, but also to help communities prioritize resources to have the greatest impact on public safety.

The following checklist is designed to help local leaders (e.g., mayors, county executives, commissioners, city managers, and council members) to quickly gauge whether their community's PMHC program corresponds to best practices, is built on strong collaboration between law enforcement and behavioral health agencies, and strives to improve outcomes for people with mental illnesses.

WHAT ARE THE THREE KEY CRITERIA FOR LOCAL LEADERS TO PROMOTE AN EFFECTIVE PMHC PROGRAM IN THEIR COMMUNITY?

Criteria 1: Demonstrate that the PMHC program is a priority for your jurisdiction.

- Local leaders send a clear message to law enforcement and behavioral health leaders, as well as the community, that collaboration on an PMHC program is a priority for the jurisdiction, and align funding and policy decisions to support PMHC programs.
- A law enforcement-behavioral health task force or other working group representing agencies and organizations that serve people who have mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders exists to coordinate resources and services and to ensure that the voices of people with mental illnesses and their families are heard.
- Local leaders ensure that law enforcement and behavioral health agency leaders provide regular briefings, preferably together, on the status of the PMHC program's performance and needs.
- Funding for PMHC programs and community-based behavioral health services, including federal and state grants, is pursued when appropriate.

Criteria 2: Determine if agencies adhere to program elements that are essential to an effective PMHC program.

- Interagency agreements, such as memoranda of understanding, govern collaborative efforts between law enforcement and behavioral health agencies including but not limited to sharing of resources and materials, the co-location of staff, the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement and behavioral health agency professionals who jointly respond to calls, information sharing, and transfer of people with mental illnesses from the custody of law enforcement to the behavioral health care agency.

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- Training for officers, dispatchers, behavioral health professionals, and supervisory personnel is funded.
 - Law enforcement can quickly access a 24/7 specialized crisis response facility that can provide assessment and treatment services to people with mental illnesses.
 - Laws, policies, procedures and IT infrastructure support information sharing between law enforcement and behavioral health agencies while meeting all privacy mandates.
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Criteria 3: Track PMHC program performance and ensure that the results are used to guide ongoing adjustments to the program.

- Law enforcement and behavioral health agency information management systems are capable of collecting and analyzing data on PMHC program performance and outcomes.
- Law enforcement and behavioral health agencies produce regular reports for local leaders on PMHC program performance as well as challenges to achieving program goals.
- The demand for service, performance, and resources devoted to PMHC programs are assessed at least annually and are used to make policy and budget decisions in support of the PMHC program.