

# Law Enforcement–Mental Health Learning Sites

Jurisdictions across the country are exploring strategies to improve the outcomes of encounters between law enforcement and people with mental illnesses. As a growing number of communities develop or enhance their specialized policing responses (SPRs) and other aspects of their comprehensive police-mental health collaboration (PMHC), many agencies are struggling with the planning process and how to tailor successful implementation strategies from other jurisdictions to address their own distinct problems and circumstances.

In an effort to expand the knowledge base for law enforcement agencies interested in starting or enhancing a PMHC, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, with assistance from a team of national experts and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), selected six police departments to serve as national law enforcement–mental health learning sites. These learning sites represent a diverse cross-section of perspectives and program examples and are dedicated to helping other jurisdictions improve their responses to people with mental illnesses. The original six learning sites are the Houston (TX) Police Department, the Los Angeles (CA) Police Department, the Madison (WI) Police Department, the Portland (ME) Police Department, the Salt Lake City (UT) Police Department, and the University of Florida Police Department.

## Los Angeles (CA) Police Department

**Total number of agency personnel:** 12,909

**Sworn:** 9,959 **Civilian:** 2,950

**Total population served:** 4 million people

**Jurisdiction and state:** Los Angeles, California

### Program Highlights

- [Multilayered approach](#) that includes triage by trained dispatchers, co-response teams, follow-up case managers, and focused community engagement
- Embedded mental health professionals in police agency
- Comprehensive data collection and information-sharing procedures
- Robust training strategy that includes 40-hour Mental Health Intervention Training
- Mental Health Crisis Response Program Advisory Board for engaging community partners

For more than four decades, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has deployed its Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) to assist patrol officers with mental health-related calls. With more than 160 personnel assigned to the MEU, the LAPD has one of the first and largest law enforcement-mental health co-response operations in the nation. The MEU falls within the Crisis Response Support Section (CRSS), which also includes the Threat Management Unit (focusing on stalking and workplace violence). The MEU has developed additional subunits over several decades to include Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Teams (SMART), the Case Assessment Management Program (CAMP), the Triage Desk, and the Administrative-Training Detail. It is a comprehensive operation that deploys professionals from diverse disciplines who work as a team with the goal of appropriately responding to calls for service involving people experiencing mental health crises.



## Law Enforcement—Mental Health Learning Sites

### Los Angeles (CA) Police Department

#### Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART)

In 1993, Los Angeles was one of the first communities to develop and implement its police-mental health co-responder SMART program to supplement MEU activities. This program, which is co-supported by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH), helps uniformed officers effectively respond to and link people in crisis to appropriate mental health services. As of 2017, they deploy 17 SMART teams on a 24/7 basis.

#### Case Assessment Management Program (CAMP)

In 2005, CAMP was implemented to help identify, track, and develop customized long-term intervention strategies. The program uses a case management approach to facilitate individuals' treatment and minimize violence and repeat encounters involving emergency first responders. CAMP pairs police detectives with psychologists, nurses, and social workers from the LACDMH.

#### Triage Desk

The MEU's long-established Triage Desk fields calls from patrol officers seeking guidance for managing situations involving people who appear to have mental illnesses. The triage officer consults the MEU database to learn if the person in question has a history of police contacts. A triage mental health nurse sits alongside the officer and can check the LACDMH databases to identify the case manager, psychiatrist, or treatment centers. The triage staff determines whether to dispatch a SMART team or have the patrol officer take the person directly to a mental health facility. LAPD personnel encountering a person believed to be in a mental health crisis must contact the Triage Desk for assistance and provide a detailed incident report. Subjects of frequent calls or interventions are referred to the CAMP coordinator for follow-up. Those follow-up reports and related database have more limited access to ensure privacy protections.

#### Administrative-Training Detail

The Administrative Training Detail is responsible for conducting the 40-hour Mental Health Intervention Training, which is delivered every other week. The Detail is also responsible for addressing mental health-related topics during training for Field Training Officers, Police Service Representatives (911 operators), and Adult Custody Officers (jail personnel).

Through these activities, the MEU works collaboratively to help people with mental illnesses avoid incarceration or hospitalization by accessing alternate care in the least restrictive environment. (Follow on Twitter @LAPDMEU, Instagram: LAPDMEU, Facebook: LAPDMEU.)

#### To learn more about the LAPD and its initiatives, please contact:

**Name:** Brian Bixler

**Title:** Lieutenant

**Address:** 100 W. First Street, Room 320, Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Phone:** (213) 996-1300

**E-mail:** 33308@lapd.lacity.org

To learn more about the Law Enforcement/Mental Health Learning Sites, please visit [csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health/learning-sites/](https://csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health/learning-sites/) or email the Law Enforcement Program team at [le-mh-learningsites@csgjusticecenter.org](mailto:le-mh-learningsites@csgjusticecenter.org).