

# Police/Mental Health Collaboration: Creating Success in Maryland

Melissa Reuland  
Research Fellow  
Sr. Research Program Manager

Police Foundation  
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

January 26, 2017

# The Problem

*“Officers complain that taking someone to the psychiatric service of the hospital is a tedious, cumbersome and uncertain procedure. They must often wait a long time ... and are occasionally obliged to answer questions ... that appear to place their own judgments in doubt.*

--Egon Bittner

1967

# The Situation Today

- Law enforcement officers can lack
  - information and skills to de-escalate crises
  - reliable and efficient access to mental health services
- Calls for service involving people with mental illnesses are complex, time-consuming, and potentially dangerous
- The largest psychiatric inpatient facilities in the United States today are actually jails—Rikers Island in New York City and the Los Angeles County Jail

# Police/Mental Health Programs

- These programs are **based in law enforcement**
- Approximately **3000 programs now in US**, and many in Canada, Australia and the UK.
- Primary variations include:
  - **Crisis Intervention Teams**—A self-selected cadre of officers is trained to identify signs and symptoms of mental illness, de-escalate the situation and bring the person in crisis to an efficient, round-the clock treatment center.
  - **Co-responder Teams**—A specially-trained officer pairs with a mental health professional to respond to the scene of a crisis involving mental illness.
  - **Follow-up Teams**—Specially trained officers work closely with mental health partners to identify people who repeatedly come to the attention of police and develop customized solutions.

# Advantages

- Reduced SWAT call outs
- Reduced arrest rates
- Reduced officer injuries
- Increased access to mental health services
- Protection from liability

# Law Enforcement/Mental Health Partnership Program

- Funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in 2005
- Publications include: Essential Elements, Training Strategies, Tailoring Responses, Statewide Implementation Models
- Police Mental Health Collaboration Toolkit:  
[https://pmhctoolkit.bja.gov/?utm\\_source=redirect&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=PMHC](https://pmhctoolkit.bja.gov/?utm_source=redirect&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=PMHC)

# How do the Essential Elements help?

- Ten elements were derived from recommendations made by a broad range of practitioners and other subject matter experts.
- They provide a common framework for program design and implementation to promote positive outcomes.
- They are sensitive to the distinctive needs and resources of each jurisdiction.
- As such, they reflect a *process-oriented* approach rather than a *model replication* approach.

# What are the essential elements of these models?

1. Collaborative Planning and Implementation
2. Program Design
3. Specialized Training
4. Call Taker and Dispatcher Protocols
5. Stabilization, Observation, and Disposition



# What are the essential elements of these models?

6. Transportation and Custodial Transfer
7. Information Exchange and Confidentiality
8. Treatment, Supports and Services
9. Organizational Support
10. Program Evaluation and Sustainability

# Element #2: Program Design

---

*“A planning committee designs a specialized law enforcement-based program to address the root causes of the problems that are impeding improved responses to people with mental illnesses and makes the most of available resources.”*

# Program Design Process

- Hinges on effective collaboration
- Identifies community problems and problem causes
- Identifies community characteristics
- Selects program activities “tailored” to problem causes and characteristics

# What's the difference?

- “Problems’ are issues community members agree must – and *can* – be changed.
- “Characteristics’ are more rigid, providing a framework within which specialized approaches must operate.

# Contact Information

---

**Melissa Reuland**

Research Fellow

[melissareuland86@gmail.com](mailto:melissareuland86@gmail.com)

[www.policefoundation.org](http://www.policefoundation.org)