

QUESTION AND ANSWERS MAY 2021 STM ARTICLE 15

Article 15

Appropriate for Clinical Support Services For Law Enforcement

Question: I'd like to know more about the duties of the Clinical Support Services person. Will this person function as a trainer/advisor to police officers? Or will this person go out on emergency calls to assist a person in a substance abuse or mental health crisis directly?

Answer: While the clinician will provide training and advice, the primary function is to respond to emergency calls with a Police Officer and/or provide follow-up services to individuals in need.

This initiative will significantly enhance real-time response to calls from individuals with mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders by initiating a co-response program that embeds an experienced clinical social worker with experience treating those struggling with addiction, into the department to support police officers in addressing the region's increasingly complex behavioral health needs.

The primary goal of this regional collaboration is to divert appropriate individuals from the criminal and juvenile justice systems prior to the point of arrest into appropriate community-based treatment services and other care options.

The long-term goals are to:

- Enhance connections between local behavioral health, social and emergency service providers to improve communication and coordination between entities and fill existing gaps in service;
- Ensure responsible use of resources by obtaining appropriate behavioral health staff support and training for law enforcement such that roles and responsibilities within the departments are clear and well-articulated; and
- Proactively reach individuals and families with behavioral health challenges to provide support and resources and prevent the need for a critical response, when possible.
- Success will mean fewer calls resulting in the use of force, arrest, physical injury to any first responders, and emergency room visits when that level of care is not indicated.
- Additional results will include increased engagement and stronger relationships with project partners, including the development of formal partnerships and regular meetings/communication with local stakeholders to better meet the behavioral health needs of individuals and families in these communities.