

**Performance Audit: Clear  
Goals and Plans for Data  
Collection Could Strengthen  
Law Enforcement  
Responses to People with  
Mental Illness**

**December 2016**

December 15, 2016

Members of the City Commission

The City Commission directed this performance audit related to law enforcement responses to people with mental illness. The City has taken a number of steps to improve how the Police Department responds to people with mental illness. The City has provided training and budgeted for a mental health squad in 2017. This performance audit addresses:

- What are the intended outcomes of the changes in how police respond to people with mental illness?
- Has the City taken steps to address the essential elements of a program to respond to people with mental illness?

I make four recommendations intended to improve the City's ability to respond to people with mental illness and provide information to evaluate and sustain improvements.

I provided the City Manager and the Chief of Police with a final draft of this report on November 18, 2016. The Chief of Police's written response is included in the report

I appreciate the cooperation I received from the Police Department and City staff and from stakeholders outside of the City government.



Michael Eglinski  
City Auditor

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# Performance Audit: Responses to mentally ill

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# Performance Audit: Responses to mentally ill

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## Results in Brief

The City has taken steps to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illnesses. Police officers receive specialized training, and the city plans to add law enforcement staff and fund a mental health professional to act as a mental health squad in 2017.

Changes to the City's approach to responding to people with mental illnesses could have a number of intended outcomes. While the City hasn't identified goals and objectives, outcomes may include: better service for individuals, reducing risks of injuries, reducing interactions with the criminal justice system, and reducing incarceration. The performance audit recommends clarifying the City's goals and objectives.

The City's efforts to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illness address the essential elements of such a program. The elements are intended to promote successful outcomes for law enforcement programs to respond to people with mental illness. The City can take advantage of mechanisms to collaborate with other agencies and providers of mental health. The City's efforts rely on approaches used in other communities. Training addresses appropriate topics and perspectives. The City has plans to develop policies and procedures for handling incidents, exchanging information, and collecting and evaluating program data. There are indicators of strong organizational support. The capacity for providing treatment and services remains uncertain. Strengthening plans for collecting and evaluating data could strengthen responses to people with mental illness.

The performance audit includes recommendations intended to improve the City's ability to respond to people with mental illness and provide information to evaluate and sustain improvements.

Recommendations are listed on page 18 and more information about the performance audit scope, objectives and methods begin on page 19.

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## Performance Audit: Responses to mentally ill

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### Steps taken to improve responses to people in crisis

The City has taken a number of steps to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illnesses. Police officers receive training in mental health first aid, many officers have also received crisis intervention team (CIT) training, and the city plans to add law enforcement staff and fund a mental health professional to act as a mental health squad in 2017.

**Mental health first aid**

Mental health first aid is an 8-hour course designed to teach people skills to help someone experiencing a mental health crisis or problem. Participants learn about recognizing symptoms, helping people in crisis, and helping refer people to services. Mental health first aid training is broadly aimed at community members, with some courses focused on law enforcement officers.

**Crisis intervention team (CIT)**

CIT training is a 40 hour course designed to teach skills to de-escalate crises, decrease the use of force, and understand law associated with mental illness. The training involves collaboration between law enforcement, mental health professionals, consumers and their families. CIT training is aimed specifically to law enforcement.

**Mental health squad and co-responder**

Trained police officers work together with an assigned mental health professional to provide specialized response and follow-up. The team provides a high level of training and knowledge to help in crises, to connect people to community services, to follow-up, and to encourage communication and collaboration among different organizations.

Police regularly respond to people with mental illnesses. For example, the Police Department reported 615 incidents involving a suicide attempt in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Handling incidents involving people with mental illness can take a lot of time.

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<sup>1</sup> The Police Department currently tracks both suicide “attempt” and “threat” incidents. The 615 includes both types of incidents.

The Police Department reported that calls with a mental health aspect have grown since 2000. The data are limited because the department doesn't specifically track calls involving people with mental illness. Most law enforcement agencies don't track calls for service that involve a person with mental illness. While the data for Lawrence are limited, an increase is plausible.

#### **Crisis center under consideration**

The County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council has been studying and evaluating the creation and operation of a mental health crisis center. A crisis center could be available to both the public and law enforcement. The crisis center could include space for intake, sobering, social detox, therapy, and both short-term and long-term stay.

Source: *Douglas County: Mental Health Crisis Intervention Center*, Treanor Architects, presentation July 2016.

Police responses to people with mental illness also affect other elements of the criminal justice system, including the courts and jail.<sup>2</sup> Like the City, Douglas County is taking steps to address how the criminal justice system interacts with people with mental illness. The County is looking at improvements to the jail and developing a crisis center that would include detox services. Jail improvements could also include mental health housing. The County is hiring a criminal justice data analyst. Law enforcement officers from the Sheriff's Department have gone through CIT training. Inmates at the County jail have access to mental health case managers and screeners. The County is also developing a behavioral health court.<sup>3</sup>

This scope of this performance audit focuses on the City's efforts to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illness. The City's changes are made in the context of other changes in the local criminal justice and community mental health systems.

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<sup>2</sup> The City is also taking some steps outside of the Police Department. For example, the City is collaborating with the University Of Kansas School Of Social Welfare to provide screening and referral services to people charged with misdemeanors in municipal court who may be struggling with a mental or substance use disorder.

<sup>3</sup> Problem solving courts are intended to treat underlying causes of crime, such as mental health issues or substance abuse. Most (63 percent) problem solving courts meet at least weekly for status hearings to monitor participants' progress. Most (57 percent) problem solving courts report that more than half of their participants successfully exit the program. See *Census of Problem-Solving Courts, 2012*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 2016.

### **Data on serious mental illness and county jail**

Nearly 1 in 5 people (18 percent) booked in the Douglas County jail were found to have serious mental illness in a study of 4 months of data. Most of the people with serious mental illness (77 percent) had a co-occurring substance use disorder and most (80 percent) were not charged with a violent offense.

Source: *Serious Mentally Ill Persons in the Douglas County Jail, Douglas County, KS*. Huskey & Associates, June 29, 2015.

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## **City changes could have a range of benefits**

Changes to the City's approach to responding to people with mental illnesses could have a number of intended outcomes. While the City hasn't identified the goals for the mental health squad, the Police Chief's budget request provides background information and initial plans for the mental health squad's duties. Among those duties would be coordinating CIT training, responding to crisis situations, following up, developing policies, collecting data, and encouraging communication with other agencies.<sup>4</sup>

A number of outcomes are common for law enforcement efforts. Common outcomes of efforts to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illness include:

- Better services for individuals – more compassionate responses, connect people with mental health services in the community, more satisfaction;
- Safer responses – reduced risks of injuries to all involved
- Reduced future interactions between individuals and the criminal justice system;
- Reduced incarceration;
- Coordinated responses, better communication, raised awareness of mental health issues and services available; and
- Reduce time to handle calls and to transport individuals; return patrol officers to duty quicker.

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<sup>4</sup> *Mental Health Squad – 2017 Budget Process Request*, memo from Tarik Khatib, Chief of Police, to Tom Markus, City Manager, April 11, 2016.

The Police Department should clarify the goals of the mental health squad and other efforts to improve responses to people with mental illness. Goals should be realistic and related to activities law enforcement plans to take. Disseminating those goals would help frame the program, inform the public, strengthen the ability to improve the efforts, and help evaluate the success of the efforts.

#### **Developing goals and objectives**

Recommended practices for improving responses to people with mental illnesses emphasize the importance of developing goals and objectives as part of the planning process. Having goals and objectives helps when designing a program, provides a framework for evaluating the program's success, and helps ensure both success and sustainability. Goals should be written, shared among partners and the community, and reviewed periodically.

- What are the overarching goals? Overarching goals describe the desired outcomes and relate to the specific problems identified in planning.
- What are the program's objectives? Objectives describe the specific activities to take in meeting the goals.

Goals should be realistic, recognizing that problems will not be eliminated or that all individuals will benefit.

Source: *Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: Tailoring Law Enforcement Initiatives to Individual Jurisdictions*, Council of State Governments Justice Center and Police Executive Research Forum for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, 2010.

Some other jurisdictions that have implemented similar programs for law enforcement response have reported success achieving outcomes. Data from surveys and police incidents supports the reported successful outcomes. See the text box for examples of the results of analysis in two cities that made changes in how they addressed incidents involving people with mental health issues.



## Examples of successful outcomes

### Overland Park evaluated a co-responder program

Overland Park compared police department employee perceptions and incident reports pre and post implementation of a co-responder model. The analysis found that after adding the co-responder:

- Officers reported that they were better prepared to deal with situations involving mental health issues; felt the department was more effective in dealing with situations and keeping people with mental health issues out of jail; and felt the department was more effective in minimizing time spend on mental health issues.
- After the co-responder program began, people were more likely to be brought to detox and less likely to be arrested or brought to an emergency room.

### Seattle evaluated a program developed under a consent decree

Seattle collected data on individual incidents involving people in crisis and surveyed police employees. Seattle has made efforts to improve training and responses to people in crisis. Among the results of the analysis were:

- Incidents involving people in crisis resulted in referral to a community resource 22 percent of the time, while incidents results in arrests 7.5 percent of the time.
- Police used force in 2 percent of the contacts with individuals in crisis; and when force was used, it was usually (82 percent) at the lowest level.
- Most department personnel surveyed (77 percent) support using crisis intervention concepts and (74 percent) felt confident in their ability to respond to crisis incidents. Training increased both support and confidence.
- Non-patrol personnel were more supportive of crisis intervention than patrol personnel.

Seattle's approach is driven by a consent decree and memorandum of understanding between the city and the U.S. Department of Justice. The consent decree followed an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice that found unconstitutional use of force. The agreements require on-going data collection and reporting. The Seattle Police can use much of the data to develop case studies for training, highlight successful officer performance, develop new response strategies, and identify systemic problems.

Sources: *The Overland Park Police Department's Mental Health Co-Responder Project*, Alex Holsinger, Department of Ciminal Justice and Criminology, University of Missouri-Kansas City; *Fifth Systemic Assessment: Crisis Intervention*, Seattle Police Monitor, February 2016; and *Seattle Police Department Crisis Intervention Team Culture Survey*, Jacqueline Helfgott, Chelsea Conn-Johnson and Natasha Wood, Department of Criminal Justice, Seattle University, May 2015.

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## Current efforts address essential elements of improving law enforcement responses

The City's efforts to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illness address the essential elements of such a program. The elements are intended to promote successful outcomes for law enforcement programs to respond to people with mental illness. The City can take advantage of mechanisms to collaborate with other agencies in the criminal justice system and providers of mental health and substance abuse services. The City's efforts rely on approaches used in other communities. Training addresses appropriate topics and perspectives. The City has plans to develop policies and procedures for handling incidents, exchanging information, and collecting and evaluating program data. There are indicators of strong organizational support. The capacity for providing treatment and services remains uncertain.

### Essential elements to improve response to people with mental illness

The U.S. Department of Justice sponsored the development of a framework to promote successful outcomes for law enforcement efforts to improve response to mentally ill people. The work identified elements common to any law enforcement-based response that could promote success while being sensitive to any jurisdiction's distinct situation. The essential elements are:

- Collaborative planning and implementation
- Program design
- Specialized training
- Call-take and dispatcher protocols
- Stabilization, observation, and disposition
- Transportation and custodial transfer
- Information exchange and confidentiality
- Treatment, supports, and services
- Organizational support
- Program evaluation and sustainability

In late October 2016, a series of checklists were released to help assess how police and mental health collaboration programs align with the essential elements. The checklists provide additional tools and are aimed specifically at law enforcement leaders, law enforcement managers, behavioral health agency leader, and local government leaders.

Sources: *Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: The Essential Elements of a Specialized Law Enforcement-Based Program*, Council of State Governments Justice Center and Police Executive Research Forum for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, 2008; and *Police-Mental Health Collaboration Program Checklists*, Council of State Governments Justice Center through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, 2016.

The performance audit includes recommendations intended to improve the City’s ability to respond to people with mental illness and provide information to evaluate and sustain improvements. The City should survey police department employees to monitor organizational support and provide baseline data for future evaluation. The City should develop a data plan and a plan to evaluate City efforts.

**Mechanisms in place to encourage collaboration**

The Douglas County CIT Council and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council provide mechanisms to collaborate. Both groups include participants involved in law enforcement, the court system, community mental health care, consumers, and the jail. The CIT Council was created in 2014 and the CJCC was created in 2016.

Collaboration mechanism	Purpose
<b>Criminal Justice Coordinating Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support communication, collaboration and coordination among key criminal justice system officials, advisory bodies, departments and community leaders to promote public health, public safety and an effective, fair and efficient criminal justice system.</li> </ul>
<b>Douglas County CIT Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine local systems and identify gaps;</li> <li>• Streamline screening processes to return law enforcement officers to duty faster;</li> <li>• Improve communication to provide consumers with better access to care;</li> <li>• Create a mental health diversion program; and</li> <li>• Provide local crisis intervention (CIT) training.</li> </ul>

Collaboration among people and organizations with a range of perspectives helps both design and implement efforts to improve how law enforcement responds to people with mental illness. Collaboration can be a challenge because communities face complex and inter-related issues when addressing responses to people with mental illness. Collaborative groups can also inform policy makers of program costs, development and progress.

### **Importance of collaboration and leadership**

A person with experience of specialized law enforcement responses in another community emphasized the importance of collaboration:

Relationship building is huge for a co-responder program. Everyone involved has to be on board and has to be working together. This takes a lot of communication between the parties including the mental health services and law enforcement. Trust and respect that goes both ways between mental health service and law enforcement is important. Leadership tone is important.

### **Program design relies on approaches used in other communities**

Design of the City's programs – both CIT and the mental health squad with co-responder – were influenced by programs in other cities. The CIT approach was established in Memphis and is used in a number of other cities.<sup>5</sup> The City's mental health squad approach is based, in part, on programs in San Antonio and Olathe. Both CIT and co-responder approaches are used in many law enforcement agencies.

Programs should be designed with an understanding of the specific situation in a given community. A planning committee can review data to understand the specific problems and design a program to address those problems.

While the City had limited data on law enforcement interactions with people with mental illness, collaborating with other organizations that are part of the criminal justice and community mental health service systems may mitigate the lack of data on the specific situation in Lawrence. In addition, learning from models in other communities mitigates the lack of planning data.

### **Specialized training addresses key topics**

Most City law enforcement officers completed CIT training and the Police Department plans to train all officers. The training covers a range of topics and includes perspectives of mental health services, law enforcement, legal, and consumers. The Police Department has a goal of training all law enforcement officers by the end of 2018.<sup>6</sup> As of August, 2016, 98 officers had completed the 40 hour training.

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<sup>5</sup> The University of Memphis CIT Center has identified over 2,500 local programs, including 17 in Johnson County, KS. The Council of State Governments Justice Center identified 11 cities in Johnson County that will be collaborating on co-responder programs in 2016, while Overland Park and Olathe have existing co-responder programs.

<sup>6</sup> *Campaign Zero*, memo from Tarik Khatib, Chief of Police, and Anthony Brixius, Police Captain, to Tom Markus, City Manager, August 10, 2016.

Key training topics	Included in local CIT syllabus
Mental illnesses and their impact on individuals, families, and communities	☑
Signs and symptoms of mental illnesses	☑
Stabilization and de-escalation techniques	☑
Disposition options	☑
Community resources	☑
Legal issues	☑

Specialized training for officers and other personnel help them respond to incidents involving people who are mentally ill. In addition to preparing officers to handle incidents, training helps collaboration and communication by involving people with different perspectives as instructors.

**City plans to develop policies and procedures for handling incidents**

The City plans to assign the responsibility for developing department policies to the new mental health squad. Department policies and procedures would cover the care and treatment of people with mental illness, intoxication, or substance abuse problems.

Law enforcement responses can involve de-escalating and observing incidents, making decisions about disposition of incidents. Responses will vary depending on the circumstances, but should take into account the nature of the specific incident, community services, and legal requirements. Handling incidents may also involve transporting people for arrest or for emergency evaluation.

**City plans to develop procedures for exchanging information**

The City plans to assign the responsibility for developing memoranda of understanding with mental health community partners and a process for communication to the new mental health squad. The co-responder for the mental health squad will be an employee of the community mental health agency and will have access to information that might not be available to someone who wasn't a medical professional and expertise in mental health to interpret and understand the information.

Law enforcement and mental health agencies should share information in a way that protects individuals' privacy and constitutional rights. Sharing information helps provide more sensitive response, reduce injury and better determine dispositions. Sharing information can be complicated

because much of the relevant information is personal, sensitive, and subject to regulation.

**Community capacity for treatment and support remains uncertain**

The community’s capacity to provide treatment, support and services remains uncertain. The County is planning a crisis center, but the plans remain uncertain. For example, funding for construction and operation of the facility are not in place. Federal data on community mental health centers suggests that Lawrence may have fewer such facilities that would be expected, which is consistent with a lack of capacity.<sup>7</sup> At the state level, public mental health funding declined in recent years while the estimated population with mental illness increased. Stakeholders identified a lack of capacity in mental health services in Lawrence as a concern.<sup>8</sup>

Item at the state level	2008	2013	Change	Percent change
Public mental health funding	\$ 391,735,023	\$ 384,821,682	\$ -6,913,341	-2 %
Public mental health funding adjusted for inflation	\$ 423,855,756	\$ 384,821,682	\$ -39,034,074	-9 %
Estimated population with mental illness persisting at least one year	139,919	150,312	10,393	7 %
Estimated population with severe and persistent mental illness	51,970	55,830	3,860	7 %

People with mental illness may need a wide range of services. Law enforcement can connect people with community mental treatment, support and services such as:

- Medication
- Counseling
- Substance abuse treatment
- Income support
- Housing
- Crisis services

<sup>7</sup> The City Auditor reviewed federal information from the *National Directory of Mental Health Treatment Facilities - 2016* for 44 urban areas selected to have similar populations, age dependency ratios, household income levels and portion of housing built between 1980 and 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout the report the term “stakeholders” refers to people with specific knowledge of the City and Douglas County and involved in law enforcement, other parts or the criminal justice system, and community mental health service provision and consumption. Information from stakeholders was gathered through both interviews and review of documents.

- Peer supports
- Case management
- Inpatient treatment

### **Indicators consistent with strong organizational support**

There are a number of indicators consistent with current strong organizational support. The City budget identifies mental health as a City Commission goal, highlighting the governing body's support. In addition, the City's legislative priorities indicate support for funding for mental health treatment and crisis stabilization facilities. The Police Chief and the City Manager supported the addition of the mental health squad. The Police Department have committed to training all officers at the 40-hour CIT level, indicating support for improving responses to people with mental illness.

Creating an organizational structure and culture to support efforts to better respond to people with mental illness helps achieve better outcomes. In addition to endorsing programs and training, leadership can demonstrate the high priority and reinforce the value of the efforts.

To understand and monitor organizational support, the Police Department should survey employees as part of an overall plan to collect data and evaluate efforts to improve law enforcement responses to people with mental illness. An employee survey can also provide a baseline for on-going evaluation of efforts to improve responses to people with mental illness.

### **Police survey in Seattle showed support, but some divergent opinions**

Employee surveys, such as those done in Overland Park, Olathe, and Seattle, can help collect information to understand and monitor organizational support. A survey designed to measure the organizational culture of the Seattle Police Department shows a high level of support for crisis intervention. But, the survey also showed some strong divergent opinions in responses to open ended questions. For example:

- Among the negative respondents, several in Seattle questioned the value of the training. One wrote, “I do not believe that this training will benefit me in dealing with the mentally ill. My street experience will suffice.” Another described the training as “an over-hyped useless program that all but ignores the realities of street level law enforcement and the unpleasant but often necessary task...having to use force on the mentally ill.” Another wrote, “being CIT trained is not the magic pill the politicians and public think it is.”
- Among the positive respondents, several in Seattle recognized the value of Seattle co-responder program. One wrote, “they are a valuable resource for following up with people who are chronic problem.” Another wrote, “excellent resource...they have specialization in this area and are useful and capable...” Another wrote, “...while CIT officers do not provide a ‘magic’ solution, they do help...sometimes the public and our upper police leadership believe that CIT officers can ‘work their magic’ and all will be ok, this is not the case and that stereotype needs to be changed.”

Source: *Seattle Police Department Crisis Intervention Team Culture Survey*, Jacqueline Helfgott, Chelsea Conn-Johnson and Natasha Wood, May 2015.

### **Recognition can build support**

One way to build organizational support is through recognition of those involved in improving law enforcement responses to people with mental illness.

The Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center recognized the Police Department and Sheriff’s Office for their work through the Pioneer Award in April 2016. Bert Nash’s CEO noted:

We are successful in this community because of our partnerships. One of the ones that I’m proudest of is our partnership with Lawrence and Douglas County law enforcement. Our partnership really allows both us and law enforcement to do what we do best to the benefit of the people who we are serving.

The National Alliance on Mental Health – Kansas recognized Officer Amber Rhoden as Kansas 2015 Crisis Intervention Team Officer of the Year. The award recognized Officer Rhoden’s work establishing CIT in Douglas County and the goal of training all officers over the coming years.

Sources: *Partners in Mental Health*, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, June 2016; and National Alliance on Mental Illness – NAMI Kansas



## **City plans to address evaluation and sustainability; data planning and initial evaluation could improve program sustainability**

The City plans to assign the responsibility for collecting data to the new mental health squad. The Police Department has emphasized continuous self-examination and community feedback as ways to improve departmental operations.<sup>9</sup> However, despite initial plans to assign the responsibility for collecting data, some stakeholders expressed concern about the City's ability to address evaluation. In addition, the Police Department does not currently track mental health related incidents. Other communities have found data collection difficult.<sup>10</sup>

### **Data collection and program evaluation**

As part of the planning process for developing a specialized response program, the Berkeley Police Department considered data collection and program evaluation. The planning process found:

In my national and local survey I found that data collection/program evaluation is consistently the weakest part of CIT programs. Many police agencies only collect anecdotal information regarding the effectiveness of their programs. This lack greatly reduces a program's ability to adjust to the changing needs of the community and the delivery of CIT. It also weakens their ability to secure public funding.

Source: *Crisis Intervention Team, A Report With Recommendations*, Berkeley Police Department, City of Berkeley, California, Officer Jeff Shannon, June 2010.

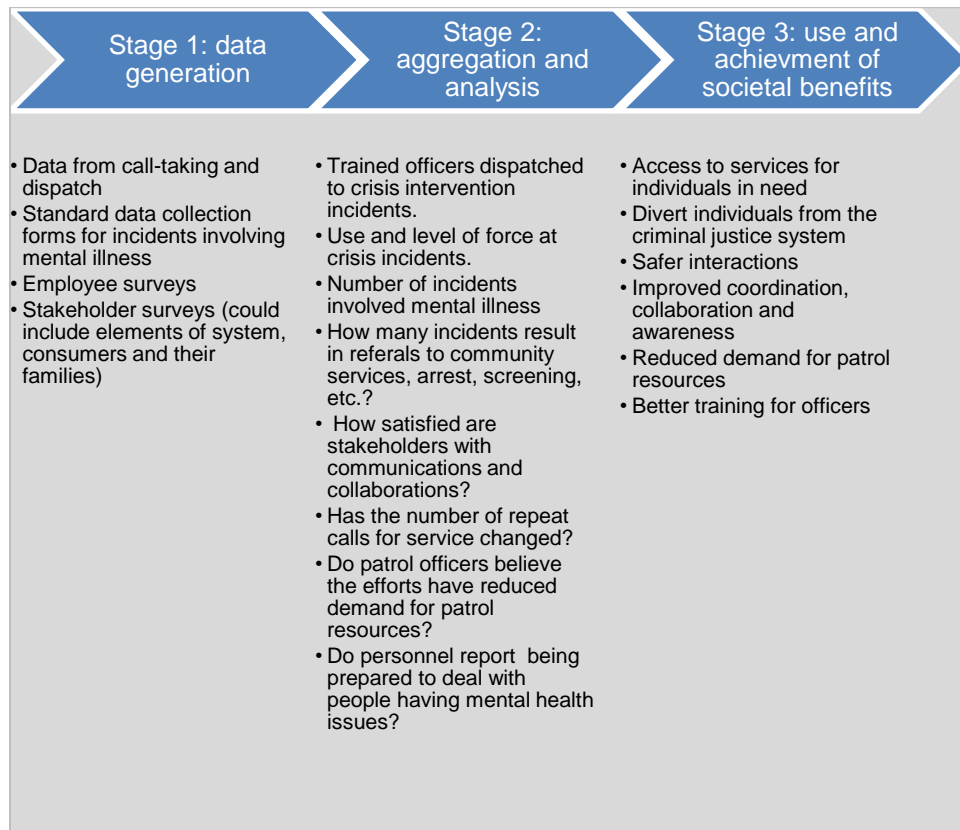
Complete and accurate data can demonstrate that efforts are meeting goals and, if not, can direct changes to improve performance. Improving performance and demonstrating that goals have been met can generate support both within the Police Department and the community at large. Data can include information collected about incidents and surveys of officers, co-responders, and others. External evaluation can further legitimize programs.

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<sup>9</sup> *Department Update and Strategic Plan*, memo from Tarik Khatib, Chief of Police, to Diane Stoddard, Interim City Manager, July 16, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: Tailoring Law Enforcement Initiatives to Individual Jurisdictions*, Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Police Executive Research Forum for the US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010. Major limitations include inconsistent call identification and noncompliance with paperwork requirement.

The exhibit below provides an illustration of a data and analytics innovation model based on examples of data and outcomes from other jurisdictions.<sup>11</sup>



Challenges that law enforcement agencies can face in collecting data include inconsistent call identification, insufficient data management systems, poor compliance with data collection, and missing data.<sup>12</sup>

Data is central to sustaining a program and there is a need to collect data sooner rather than later. A feedback loop, which could include formal evaluation of whether a program achieves its objectives, can help sustain a new program. Both Olathe and Overland Park included pre/post implementation data in evaluations of their co-responder programs. Collecting data before implementing the co-responder programs allowed the agencies to reach preliminary conclusions about how effective the programs had been. The evaluations also provided elected officials and community residents with information about the impact of the programs.

<sup>11</sup> The data and innovations analytics framework is from *Data and Analytics Innovation: Emerging Opportunities and Challenges*, Highlights of a forum convened by the Comptroller General of the United States, September 2016.

<sup>12</sup> *Law Enforcement Mental Health Data Collection Project*, Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2016.

The Police Department should develop plans to collect data and evaluate the success of efforts to improve responses to people with mental illness.

### **College town challenges**

College towns have demographics that are different than many other cities. Law enforcement officers involved in responses to people with mental illness in two college towns identified some challenges:

#### **Challenges from University of Florida Police program**

- Can't predict violence; can try to prevent and mitigate it
- Securing ongoing commitments from the top-down
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with all stakeholders
- Navigating legal and ethical guidelines for protecting privileged information
- Tailoring the model to the limitations of the institution
- Reducing resistance from those who don't buy into the process and finding ways to overcome roadblocks.

#### **Challenges from Madison Police Department related to university population**

- Constant change in student population
- Issues of mental health, drug and alcohol abuse
- Culture of student life
- Private dorms/apartments
- Engaging university stakeholders: student leadership, university leadership, Greek council; sororities and fraternities, large apartment complexes.

#### **Mental health conditions among students at the University of Kansas**

A survey of the health of the campus community at the University of Kansas provides some context for mental health issues of students. Mental health issues are relatively common among all adults.

Based on the spring 2015 survey of University of Kansas students:

- About a quarter (27 percent) of respondents had been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental health condition.
- Nearly 1 in 10 (9.2 percent) of respondents had seriously considered suicide.

Based on national data, about 1 in 5 (17.9 percent) of all adults reported any mental illness. National data also shows that co-occurring mental health issues and substance use disorders are most prevalent among adults aged 18 to 25.

Sources: *Voices from the Field: Lessons Learned from Law Enforcement Mental Health Partnerships*, Council of State Governments Justice Center webinar, March 2014; and *National College Health Assessment II, University of Kansas, Executive Summary*, American College Health Association, Spring 2015.

## **Impact of changes on patrol workload uncertain**

It isn't currently feasible to estimate the effect of a crisis stabilization center and specialized law enforcement responses on the Police Department's patrol workload. Estimating the effect would require reliable and completed data about current workload related to incidents involving people with mental illness and a sound basis for expected changes in disposition of those incidents. The City doesn't currently track police incidents involving people with mental illness. Changes in disposition of incidents are based on a complex mix of actions. The actions involve law enforcement, other elements of the criminal justice system, and the community mental health system. Data from other jurisdictions suggests that there are wide ranges in dispositions even in relatively similar communities. The combination of limited data and inherent complexity make estimating workload affects infeasible.

A crisis center is likely to be used by patrol officers, and a 24/7 center with streamlined intake can return officers to service quickly. The crisis center that serves Johnson and Wyandotte counties has a target of receiving people brought in by law enforcement within 10 minutes. Data the center tracks showed that law enforcement brought an individual to the center twice a day on average during the 18 months of April 2014 through September 2015.

Anecdotal information from Lawrence suggests that improving responses to people with mental illness could reduce their interactions with law enforcement. The Police Department presented a case-study of an individual who called the Police Department 352 times over a one year period. After multiple agencies worked together, the individual was able to stay in their housing, received financial assistance from the state, improved their relationship with people providing care, and nearly eliminated calls to the Police Department.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Going Beyond Crisis*, Lawrence, Kansas Police Department, CIT International Conference Presentation, April 2016.

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## Recommendations

The City Auditor makes the following recommendations intended to better align the City's efforts with recommended practices, to provide data to understand the success of efforts and make changes as needed to improve outcomes, to communicate with decision-makers and the public, and to help ensure that improvements are sustainable:

1. The Police Chief should clarify goals of the department's efforts to improve responses to people with mental illness and should disseminate the goals.
2. The Police Chief should survey department employees before implementing the mental health squad to establish a baseline and to understand the support for the mental health squad approach within the organization.
3. The Police Chief should develop a plan for collecting data related to how the department responds to people with mental illness.
4. The Police Chief should develop an initial plan to evaluate the way the department responds to people with mental illness, to identify program changes that might be needed, and to help sustain the program.

During the fieldwork for this performance audit, the City Auditor identified several other issues that could warrant performance audit work in the future and attention from the City Commission. Those issues are:

- Opportunities to increase the use of house arrest for people sentenced at the municipal court;
- Opportunities to reduce the number of people who fail to appear at the municipal court

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## Performance Audit: Responses to mentally ill

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### Scope, methods and objectives

The objectives of this performance audit are to answer:

- What are the intended outcomes of changes in how the police response to people with mental illnesses?
- Has the City taken steps to address the essential elements of a program to respond to people with mental illnesses?

The performance audit was directed by the City Commission.

The scope of this performance audit excluded review of call-taking and dispatch protocols because emergency communications is a County function. Call taking and dispatch protocols are components of how law enforcement responds to people with mental illness. The City plans to assign the duty of examining the potential for the dispatch system to recognize trained officers on duty and use those officers for mental health related incidents. The City also has representatives on the advisory committee that can provide advice to the County Administrator and make recommendations about training for County employees who handle call taking and dispatch.

To identify criteria and understand the program and issues, the City Auditor reviewed relevant literature and interviewed stakeholders. Among the key documents reviewed were:

- *Improving Response to People with Mental Illness: The Essential Elements of a Specialized Law Enforcement-Based Program*, Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Police Executive Research Forum for the US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2008.
- *Law Enforcement Responses to People with Mental Illness: A Guide to Research-Informed Policy and Practice*, Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2009.

- *Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: Tailoring Law Enforcement Initiatives to Individual Jurisdictions*, Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Police Executive Research Forum for the US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010.
- *Building Safer Communities: Improving Police Response to Persons with Mental Illness: Recommendations from the IACP National Policy Summit*, International Association of Chiefs of Police (supported by the US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance and the US Department of Health and Human Services - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration), June 2010.

The City Auditor interviewed stakeholders and reviewed documents to include perspectives of community mental health services and different elements of the criminal justice system. The auditor reviewed documents from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and Justice Matters, a local inter-faith organization. The auditor also reviewed meeting minutes and reports to the City Commission from the City’s 1991-92 conversations of crisis stabilization and law enforcement.

The City Auditor reviewed documents from a number of other jurisdictions that have experience with specialized responses to people with mental illness. The other jurisdictions included: Olathe; Overland Park; Topeka; Kansas City, Kansas; Seattle; Berkeley, California; Gainesville, Florida; and Madison, Wisconsin; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Portland, Oregon; Cleveland, Ohio; and Ferguson, Missouri.

The City Auditor conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require planning and performing the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. The City Auditor believes that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives.

The City Auditor provided a final draft of the report to the Police Chief and the City Manager on November 18, 2016.

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## **Performance Audit: Responses to mentally ill**

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### **Management's Response**

City Code requires a written response addressing agreement or disagreement with findings and recommendations, reasons for disagreement, plans for implementing solutions, and a timetable for completing such activities.





TARIK KHATIB  
CHIEF OF POLICE

lawrenceks.org/police

# City of Lawrence

## POLICE

Law Enforcement Center  
111 E. 11th Street  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
(785) 832-7501

Investigations & Training Center  
4820 Bob Billings Pkwy.  
Lawrence, KS 66049  
(785) 830-7400

CITY COMMISSION

MAYOR  
MIKE AMYX

COMMISSIONERS  
LESLIE SODEN  
STUART BOLEY  
MATTHEW J. HERBERT  
LISA LARSEN

December 15, 2016

Mr. Michael Eglinski, City Auditor  
6 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lawrence, KS 66044

*Re: Performance Audit*

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your recent Performance Audit, *Clear Goals and Plans for Data Collection Could Further Strengthen Law Enforcement Responses to People with Mental Illness*. Your work examining the issues related to implementing programs that specifically address the Lawrence Police Department's responses to people with mental illness is helpful. In your report, you make four recommendations. The purpose of this letter is to respond to those recommendations.

1. **The Chief of Police should clarify goals of the department's efforts to improve responses to people with mental illness and disseminate the goals.**

The goal of our efforts is to provide for the best possible outcome for those with mental illness when a response involves the department. This is two-pronged. The first is to ensure initial responding officers have the training and knowledge to best handle mental health crisis calls. The second is comprised of a follow-up or case management component to connect individuals with the appropriate resources as well as attempt to reduce the frequency of repeat crisis events.

2. **The Police Chief should survey department employees before implementing the mental health squad to establish a baseline and support for the mental health squad approach within the organization.**

This is an excellent suggestion and the department will develop a survey. I agree that it would be useful in understanding officer support for the program as well as measuring if the program has an impact on that support over time. Training, department communication(s), and additional examination can take place depending on the results.

3. **The Police Chief should develop a plan for collecting data related to how the department responds to people with mental illness.**



The department is somewhat limited in terms of data collection. The memorandum, *Mental Health Squad – 2017 Budget request* (dated April 11, 2016) utilized available police Calls For Service (CFS) information which showed a marked increase in the number of mental health related calls. I believe this, along with staff experience and research, supports the idea for the implementation of a Mental Health Squad. Part of the duties of the squad's supervisor will be to conduct further analysis. With the ability to solely focus on mental health related reports, a more time intensive hand-search analysis can be conducted. Another future department project, the collection of Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) information, may also help with this. Information about whether a contact with an individual was related to mental health could also be gathered. Any such data collection will have to take into consideration the privacy of individuals.

4. **The Police Chief should develop an initial plan to evaluate the way the department responds to people with mental illness, to identify program changes that might be needed, and to help sustain the program.**

As we get closer to implementation of the Mental Health Squad, I anticipate several things will occur. These include the development of specific department polices, standard operating procedures and the crafting of various memorandums of understanding with partner agencies in the community. Based on data collection, feedback, and continual examination of best practices, changes and adjustments can be made to the program and guiding documents. Additional training or continuing education for officers is also anticipated.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. The Lawrence Police Department looks forward to meeting the expectations of the community and doing everything we can to ensure successful outcomes when responding to people with mental illness.

Very truly yours,



Tarik Khatib  
Chief of Police

cc: Tom Markus, City Manager  
Diane Stoddard, Assistant City Manager  
Casey Toomay, Assistant City Manager