

Law Enforcement–Mental Health Learning Sites

Jurisdictions across the country are exploring strategies to improve the outcomes of encounters between law enforcement and people who have mental illnesses. As a growing number of communities develop or enhance 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 ten law enforcement agencies 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 who have mental illnesses. The original six learning sites, selected in 2010, are Houston (TX) Police Department, Los Angeles (CA) Police Department, Madison (WI) Police Department, Portland (ME) Police Department, Salt Lake City (UT) Police Department, and University of Florida Police Department. In 2017, due to the success of the program, four new sites were added, including Arlington (MA) Police Department, Gallia, Jackson, Meigs Counties (OH) Sheriffs’ Offices, Madison County (TN) Sheriff’s Office, and Tucson (AZ) Police Department.

Madison County (TN) Sheriff’s Office

Total number of agency personnel: 358

Sworn: 182 Civilian: 176

Total population served: 97,663 people

Jurisdiction and state: Madison County, Tennessee

Program Highlights

- Participates in an inter-agency collaborative, which includes representatives from city, county, and state criminal justice and behavioral health agencies
- Operates in a primarily rural area with an increased population during business hours due to commuter influx
- Uses a comprehensive training strategy, including 40-hour [Crisis Intervention Team \(CIT\) training](#)
- Established processes for law enforcement personnel to identify and connect appropriate people to a 24/7 Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU)
- Formalized data collection processes with information-sharing agreements

In 2009, Madison County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO)—in collaboration with other criminal justice and behavioral health partners—formed the Crisis Team Training Planning Committee, which evolved into the Jackson-Madison County Law Enforcement-Mental Health Collaborative. Once established, the collaborative expanded to include representatives from an increasingly diverse set of agencies across the criminal justice and behavioral health systems at the city, county, and state levels.

The collaborative has been essential to the planning, implementation, and provision of critical services for the community, including the development of a 24/7 Crisis Stabilization Unit, a Homeless Unit, and mental health counselor positions embedded in the Madison County Jail.

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1993	2009	2010	2012	2017
Mobile Crisis Unit created by Pathways Behavioral Health Services	Formalized LE-MH Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st CIT training • 24/7 CSU 	Homeless Unit at Jackson Police Department	West Tennessee Regional Training Center

Multi-Agency Collaboration

Strong multi-agency, multi-level partnerships are foundational to the Jackson-Madison County Law Enforcement-Mental Health Collaborative. Representatives in the collaborative regularly meet to discuss training opportunities and evaluations, development of services, common clients, and process improvements to better serve the population with behavioral health needs and criminal justice involvement.

The collaborative includes criminal justice and behavioral health agencies from the city, county, and state levels. These state-local collaborations have been crucial to the sustainability of the initiative through strategic guidance, funding opportunities, and improved coordination with similar initiatives across the state. Additionally, the collaborative frequently coordinates with, and has common members among, two local advisory boards: The Community Corrections Advisory Committee and the County Corrections Partnership. Cross-collaboration with these initiatives has created a stronger regional network, leading to improved responses to people who have behavioral health needs and are in the criminal justice system.

Collaborating Partners	
LOCAL	STATE
Pathways Behavioral Health Services (PBHS)	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - TN
Aspell Recovery Center	Depression, Bipolar Support Alliance
West Tennessee Healthcare	TN Suicide Prevention Network
Madison County Jail	Memphis VA Medical Center Mental Health Services
Jackson Police Department	TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Jackson City Court	TN Office of Criminal Justice

Comprehensive Mental Health Training

In 2010, the collaborative trained 30 first responders during its first 40-hour CIT training. Since then, an average of 50-75 people per year have been trained, including representatives from local law enforcement agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Tennessee Bureau of Investigations (TBI), fire departments, hospital security, and community corrections agencies. To increase the number of people who could be trained in CIT, the collaborative introduced “train-the-trainer” courses in 2017, in coordination with the opening of the new West Tennessee Regional Training Center (WTRTC) in July 2017.

First responders have the opportunity to receive CIT instruction and other trainings (such as Mental Health First Aid, crisis mitigation and management tactics for dealing with veterans, administering Narcan, and specialized training for call takers and dispatchers) in the WTRTC, which is managed by a full-time training director. These trainings are offered to a wide variety of stakeholders and personnel, including patrol officers, corrections officers, hospital security, university police, paramedics, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, emergency management staff, probation and parole officers, and call takers and dispatchers.

Crisis Stabilization Unit and Mobile Crisis Unit

Since 1993, PBHS has operated a Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU), which allows mental health professionals to provide crisis intervention services on scene at the request of law enforcement officers and family members. In 2010, a 24/7 Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) was also established by PBHS to help better connect people in crisis to treatment and services. The collaborating agencies have established processes and protocols to ensure law enforcement officers appropriately connect people in crisis to the mental health and substance addiction professionals at the CSU. An officer may contact the MCU for assistance, or may transport the individual to the CSU directly, given that the individual does not need medical clearance. Approximately 300-450 individuals have been identified annually by law enforcement personnel since 2010 and subsequently connected to the CSU for services and referral to community resources.

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Data Collection and Information Sharing

The Madison County Sheriff's Office and Jackson Police Department share the same data management system, where information on calls for service as well as the number and characteristics of adults transported to the CSU, the state mental health institute, and the county jail is stored. Within this shared system, law enforcement personnel are able to flag people in the database who have exhibited a potential behavioral health need, which helps to prepare officers for future encounters.

Mental health counselors from PBHS that are embedded in the Madison County Jail can also access the database through an information-sharing agreement. These mental health counselors provide on-site screening, assessment, and referral to treatment and services for people booked into the jail, and are able to store this information in the shared database. The mental health counselors have unique permission to view these records (while law enforcement personnel does not), and also have remote access to PBHS's Electronic Health Records to help identify people who have used PBHS services and are booked into the jail.

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To learn more about the Law Enforcement-Mental Health Learning Sites, please visit csgjusticecenter.org/law-enforcement/projects/mental-health-learning-sites/ or email the Law Enforcement Program team at le-mh-learningsites@csgjusticecenter.org.