



For immediate release

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Law Enforcement and Behavioral Health Professionals Expand Mobile Crisis Response

Helena, MT - Lewis and Clark County Public Health (LCPH) is teaming up with St. Peter's Health and the Helena Police Department to enhance and expand behavioral health and crisis intervention services through the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) Community Coalition.

"When someone in our community experiences a behavioral health crisis, be it mental illness or substance misuse, we have a team of first responders that can partner with law enforcement and help take the lead on crisis response and intervention," says Jolene Jennings, LCPH Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Specialist.

"This is critical work that needs to be expanded – and also funded and staffed."

According to the MCRT Community Coalition, a coordinated mobile crisis response is a best practice in rural Montana, aiding both law enforcement and behavioral health professionals in reducing emergency room visits, diverting people from detention centers and jails, reducing trauma for those already in crisis, and ensuring the safety of both police officers and citizens.

Other coalition members include Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office, Helena and East Helena Public Schools, Many Rivers Whole Health, 911 Dispatch Office, and neighboring agencies from Jefferson and Broadwater counties.

To enhance and expand existing mobile crisis response, the Helena City Police Department, LCPH, and St. Peter's Health recently received a program grant totaling \$549,976 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

One key goal of this collaborative grant is to expand response to northern areas of Lewis and Clark County and collaborate with and plan for how to expand into neighboring Jefferson and Broadwater counties in a timely and sustainable way.

"Communities in our neighboring counties have a well-known shortage of behavioral health crisis and continuum of care services and workforce," reports Kari Koehler, MSN, RN Chief Nursing Officer at St. Peter's Health.

"As a mobile crisis response team and coalition, we want to help fill in those gaps in care."

Though LCPH is the grant applicant and funding recipient, St. Peter's Health has been selected to contract with LCPH over the next three years to receive funding allocations totaling over \$477,000 for MCRT planning, data collection, and program implementation.

"Public safety is the primary objective of this project," says Chief of Police Brett Petty.

"Expanding mobile crisis response services means increased safety for individuals, for law enforcement officers, and for our community at-large. Everybody wins."

Since its inception in November 2022, St. Peter's Health behavioral health professionals and local law enforcement have teamed together to provide mobile crisis support for over 775 individuals experiencing a mental health crisis in their homes, at school, in shelters, in businesses, and on the street. As a result, over 600 emergency room visits were averted and over 500 incarcerations were not required.

If you have questions about the work of the Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Leadership Team or the Mobile Crisis Response Team Community Coalition, you can email Jolene Jennings at jjennings@lccountymt.gov or visit the Lewis and Clark Public Health -Behavioral Health webpage at <https://www.lccountymt.gov/Government/Public-Health/Behavioral-Health>.