

Overview - Mental Health Diversion Initiative

Below are highlights regarding the Crisis Call Diversion Program:

- As part of the FY 2019 Budget, Council included \$75,000 to conduct a study regarding first response to mental health incidents so that “system improvements will ensure that in an incident involving an individual in mental health crisis, Austin's first responders will ensure that individual receives clinical care as quickly as possible, thereby ensuring the safety and security of the individual and the community.”
- On January 31, 2019, Council approved staff’s recommendation to negotiate and execute a contract with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) to conduct a study. MMHPI developed recommendations, such as,
 1. Creating a mental health crisis call identification and management training for all call takers.
 2. Integrating mental health clinicians directly on the 911 dispatch floor to participate at an earlier triage point with call takers, diverting calls to the most appropriate resources, and providing support and appropriate information to officers or medics on scene.
 3. Sustaining the Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (EMCOT), including use of telehealth capabilities to expand immediate access to crisis screening.
- In December 2019, APD implemented the Crisis Call Diversion (CCD) program with Integral Care, which focuses on appropriately diverting mental health related calls received by the Division to an Integral Care EMCOT Call Center Clinician (C3).
- Effective December 6, 2019, APD began identifying and tracking every call for service with a potential or confirmed mental health component.
- Effective December 19, 2019, APD embedded an Integral Care (IC) clinician in the APD area of the operations floor in the Emergency Communications Center and on October 19, 2020, ATCEMS embedded a clinician in the ATCEMS area of the operations floor.
- The clinicians provide the caller with complete triage screenings, assist with verbal crisis de-escalation, complete safety planning, dispatch Integral Care’s crisis teams, and provide other community referrals as appropriate. The goal is to engage the caller in addressing mental health issues within the mental health treatment system, as opposed to the criminal justice system.

- **IC Clinician available in APD & EMS Communications 7 days a week during peak times**
 - The Meadows Report identified the hours of 8:00 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week, as the most critical times for stationing clinicians at the Emergency Communications Center, to field phone calls and provide telehealth services.
 - Currently, a clinician is available at the Emergency Communications Center to field phone calls during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to midnight, Monday through Friday, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 - Integral Care is working to provide 24/7 coverage as Integral Care hires staff to fill the remaining timeframes.
- **Diversion Data**
 - Since December 16, 2019 there were:
 - 39,681 – 911 calls received by APD where mental health was a factor
 - 1,133 - 911 calls diverted to IC Clinician
 - 929 - "True Diversions", no officers were dispatched
- All APD licensed Tele-Communicators have been trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).
- For the FY 2020-21 budget, the City Council approved \$1.4 million towards expanding and enhancing the Integral Care EMCOT contract for clinical staff and telehealth services, and \$1.1 million to expand the mental health diversion initiative within the Community Health Paramedic Program by adding seven new positions and necessary equipment.
- In addition, Council dedicated funding to hire a contractor to fully implement the recommendations in the Meadows report. The City hired the Meadows Mental Health Institute on October 1, 2020 and work kicked off on October 5th.
 - A work group began meeting, which included representatives from the Meadows Institute, APD, Integral Care, and ATCEMS.
 - Currently the contractor is:
 - Collecting information on current state of operations,
 - Drafting a system map, and
 - Developing plans for the implementation process.
- We anticipate providing an update to Mayor and Council on progress in early 2021.