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Local law enforcement and OCHN launch co-responder program



Pictured from left to right: Bloomfield Township Police Chief, Phil Langmeyer; Auburn Hills Police Chief, Jeff Baker; Birmingham Police Chief, Mark Clemence; OCHN Executive Director and CEO, Dana Lasenby; and Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan President, Mariam Noland.

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI | August 4, 2021 – Local law enforcement in three Oakland County communities are launching a new program to improve mental health supports when responding to calls from individuals experiencing a crisis.

The Co-response Community Outreach (Core) initiative, spearheaded by the Auburn Hills, Birmingham, and Bloomfield Township municipal departments, contracts an Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) licensed, mental health clinician to improve services to and interactions with individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use emergency.

“We’re extremely grateful for the vision of these three, proactive and responsive police departments,” says OCHN Executive Director and CEO, Dana Lasenby. “Their decision to initiate the Co-response program helps ensure that people living in their communities who experience a mental health or substance use crisis are connected to valuable, behavioral health supports.”

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COVID-19 and related societal shifts have resulted in increased mental health and substance use emergencies across Oakland County, the state, and the nation. Many of the situations law enforcement are responding to require skills that only a trained, mental health professional can provide.

“On behalf of all three police departments, I want to express our appreciation to Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan for approving a \$75,000 grant to help fund the clinician position at OCHN, which is key to the program’s success, explains Birmingham Chief of Police, Mark Clemence. “We’re also thankful to the support we received from our local, elected officials who unanimously approved the interlocal agreements necessary to embark on this important community collaboration.”

Supports provided by the Co-response, mental health clinician include, but are not limited to, case management consultation, crisis intervention, service coordination, and referrals to public mental health or community resources.

“The Community Foundation is pleased to provide funds to the Co-response Community Outreach initiative,” says Mariam Noland, president Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. “The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the mental health of so many people in our community. We applaud the Auburn Hills, Birmingham and Bloomfield Township police departments for partnering with OCHN on a collaborative and creative approach to protect and serve.”

The official start date for the OCHN Co-response clinician is Monday, August 9, 2021. The work schedule established for this critical, community service role aligns with days and times identified by the three police departments for when there is a high frequency of mental health or substance use crisis calls.

About OCHN

OCHN leads a provider service network that assists approximately 23,000 Oakland County citizens at more than 300 service sites across the county. People who receive public mental health services through OCHN's provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder. The majority of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN's goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to “inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities” reflects an unyielding belief in a “Valuable System for Valued People.” Programs and supports provided by OCHN's service network are available at www.oaklandchn.org.