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The Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) Timeline of Events

The month of September was an exciting one for the Behavioral Health Unit. The unit has continued to implement policy and enact procedures to connect individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis, to the appropriate services.

The Mobile Crisis Units (MCUs) are meeting regularly to share critical information about the individuals they are working with, with the hopes of connecting these individuals to the proper resources. Also, when contacting individuals who are in a mental health crisis, the MCU cars often assist each other. This saves precincts from deploying resources, time, and effort of its patrol officers. This also allows the three MCU cars to work more in-depth in assessing risk, problem-solving within the unit and triaging referrals, all with the goal of providing the best possible service and outcomes.

Also, the BHU continues to meet monthly with the BHU Advisory Committee (BHUAC). The purpose of the BHUAC is to provide guidance to assist the City of Portland and the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) in the development and expansion of Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT), Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU), Service Coordination Team (SCT), Bureau of Emergency Communication crisis call triage, and utilization of community-based mental health services. The Behavioral Health Unit Advisory Committee will analyze and recommend appropriate changes to policies, procedures, and training methods regarding police contact with persons who may be mentally ill or experiencing a mental health crisis, with the goal of de-escalating the potential for violent encounters.

For more information on the BHU, please go to our website at: www.portlandoregon.gov/police/62135

The Behavioral Health Unit (BHU)



In the Field: BHU Success Stories

In September 2013, East Precinct Night Shift Officers were contacted by The Bureau of Emergency Communication (BOEC/911). A caller had contacted BOEC after observing an anonymous post on a social media website, by somebody who was threatening suicide. The night shift officers were unable to locate contact information for the subject making the threats, so they referred the call to the BHU who began working on the case the following morning.

Members of the BHU attempted to contact the anonymous poster through the social media website, to offer outreach. However, the subject immediately pulled the information down from the website. With assistance from Missing Person Detectives, officers in the BHU were able to get an email address for the subject and again attempted outreach through this email account; however, they did not receive any response.

Later, the BHU was able to locate a phone number for the person through the email provider's account information. When the BHU attempted outreach over the phone, the unit again did not receive any response. Nevertheless, the phone number led to an address where MCU officers attempted to contact the subject over three days and nights. On the fourth day the subject returned the BHU's phone calls and began engaging with Project Respond Clinicians.

Ultimately the subject thanked the BHU for the outreach and reported that the intervention prevented him from following through with his suicide plan. The subject is now working closely with his therapist. This is a great example of the importance of the teamwork that takes place every day between various units within the Portland Police Bureau and its partners.



Meet Josh Silverman



Josh Silverman

BHU
 MCU Officer

Josh Silverman has been with the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) for about 4 years and working in the BHU is his first specialty assignment. Prior to joining PPB, Josh worked as a Special Education Para-Educator, as a GED Tutor at Inverness Jail, and as an English Teacher in Istanbul, Turkey. Much of his time, in these previous places of employment, was spent managing behavioral issues, de-escalating people in crisis, tailoring lesson plans to different learning styles, and caring for the physical well-being of medically fragile people.

Josh is the police officer component of Mobile Crisis Unit 3 (MCU3) and is teamed up with Mental Health Clinician Cindy Hackett. When Central Precinct Patrol contacts subjects with significant mental health issues who are either a) a significant risk to others, or b) utilizing significant public safety resources, MCU3 creates an action plan to assist the individual.

Josh states that in order to be successful in his position, people must have patience – patience with a very slow and often difficult system, patience with individuals with mental illness who often backslide on their progress, and patience with people who expect MCU3 to be mental health experts and fix every situation immediately. Coupled with patience, Josh says his tenacity also helps him to be successful. He often contacts decision-makers and continues that relationship with partners until people are connected to the proper services.

Josh states one of the major obstacles the BHU faces on a daily basis is lack of affordable housing options for clients with mental illness. Also, the individuals the he works with are usually not accessing services due to a host of barriers. Some of these barriers include system issues, such as lack of insurance, capacity, and scheduling. Josh likes being part of the team to help break down these barriers.

As far as working in the BHU, Josh explains that the most rewarding aspects are breaking down stereotypes that people have about the police and he states that he enjoys the opportunity to visit people when they are not in crisis. When it comes to the future of the BHU, Josh says he hopes that the BHU can replicate the SCT Model for mental health services, by including a fully-funded in-patient facility.

✓ Facts and Figures

On September 30, 2013, the BHU released a report to the public titled, **An Analysis of Completed Suicides: April 2011-June 2013**.

The Analysis was designed to be an initial look at reports of completed suicides, to the Portland Police Bureau.

Some of the interesting statistics that were

uncovered in this analysis were: There were a total of **202** completed suicides, between the **April 2011 through June 2013**; with a **rate of 34.4** per 100,000, over that time period.

There was an average **7.5 completed suicides per month**. The average days between completed suicides was **3.9 days**; with the longest time between completed suicides being **23 days**. Also, the **Summer**

months had the highest adjusted seasonal average of completed suicides.

By completing this report, the BHU, and its partners, hopes to illuminate mental health crisis situations, including suicides in the City of Portland; thus, helping the bureau better identify these situations and deploy resources as needed.

