

The Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) News

As we welcome in the fall months, the BHU and Portland Police Bureau are going through some exciting changes. First, Officer Jim Stegemeyer was hired to work as a Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU) officer within the BHU. He will be paired with Mental Health Clinician Averyl Growden and primarily be covering North Precinct.

Next, after being with BHU from its inception, former Service Coordination Team (SCT) Officer Bret Burton was promoted to Sergeant. Bret has spent time working in Central Precinct (both Nights and Afternoons) and also worked as part BHU's Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU). Bret's efforts were instrumental in the early stages of the development of the BHU. The BHU congratulates Bret and thanks him for his contributions to the team. We know he will do great things in his new assignment!

Also August 29, 2014, Federal District Court Judge Michael Simon issued his order accepting the proposed Settlement Agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice and the City of Portland. He found that the Agreement, as a whole, is fair, adequate and reasonable to address the claims raised in the original complaint. Additionally, a public forum for the introduction and interview of the three candidates for the Compliance Officer/Community Liaison (COCL) position took place on September 29, 2014. The City will accept public input on the candidates through Oct. 29 and the City Council expects to offer a contract this fall to one of the three finalists. If you would like to provide feedback to the City Council, please visit the following the link <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/mayor/65898>.

For more information relating to the BHU, please go to (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/bhu>).



BHU Stories from the Field

On September 2, 2014, officers from Central Precinct responded to a residence on a call of a 17 year old individual who was experiencing symptoms of his psychiatric illness. It was reported that the 17 year old was armed with a knife and was holding it against his chest, threatening suicide.

Officers arrived on scene and had the family exit the residence. A plan was developed to try to contact the individual on the phone to see if he would come outside where officers could assist him. The individual would not respond despite several attempts to communicate with him. As the incident continued, officers requested that Project Respond come to the scene, and the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) Sergeant was contacted for consultation.

As the officers pursued their efforts to talk with the individual, the young man continued to ignore the officers and moved throughout the house. The individual then went out a window, climbed down a tree to the ground and ran into the woods behind the house. It was at this time the CNT Sergeant informed officers that during his fact-gathering on the individual, he learned that the individual had told a counselor he had stashed a pistol in the woods behind his house to use to shoot himself.

With the assistance of numerous Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT) members, Project Respond, and the CNT Sergeant, officers on-scene were able to get a better understanding of the individual's current state of mind and the actual danger he might pose to himself or others. After talking with the parents, the officers concluded the story about the individual stashing a gun in the wooded area was most likely untrue. Further, the parents told officers that they believed that if the police were to leave, the individual would most likely return home after a short time.

Based on all that information, a safety plan was developed with the help of Project Respond and the parents agreed with the plan. A decision was then made to leave the scene. The individual was referred to the BHU for follow-up.

BHU and Partners Working Together!

On September 22, 2014 officers from East Precinct were dispatched to a Cascadia Residential Mental Health Care Facility. Dispatch reported a resident making threats to staff and becoming physical with them.

Officer Betsy Hornstein, an Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT) Officer from North Precinct, was also dispatched to assist. On arrival the officers and sergeant developed a plan to address the subject, should he come outside and become violent.

When he did come outside, Officers Steiner and Hornstein spoke with him at length which resulted in their being able to de-escalate the situation.

Project Respond arrived, and after a safety plan was developed with the staff at the facility, the person returned to their room without a Director's Hold.

Meet Jim Stegemeyer



Officer Jim Stegemeyer has been with the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) for over 20 years. In that time, Jim has worked various patrol shifts, was part of Central Precinct's Youth Bike Unit, a Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) officer and a Central Precinct Crime Analyst. Before coming to work for PPB, Jim worked in the Maritime industry.

Jim is assigned to Mobile Crisis Unit 1 (MCU1) and teamed up with Mental Health Clinician Averyl Growden. Jim and Averyl are primarily responsible for interacting with individuals in North Portland. Some of the responsibilities Jim has within the BHU are managing, problem-solving, and connecting people with mental illness who are referred to the BHU to the resources they need.

Jim states that often "My partner/clinician and I patiently address problems to come up with creative solutions to help those people in need."

Jim further relates "Having worked patrol for 20 years, I was encouraged that one of the goals of the unit when dealing with referrals is to reduce the amount of frequent contacts that people who need help have with patrol officers and to try to find solutions for individuals other than dialing 911 or causing others to call 911. I'm "passionate" about helping the street officer and getting people who have frequent encounters with the police the resources they need."

As far as goals that Jim wants to accomplish while working for the BHU, Jim says "I want to continue to further our relationships with the street officers and sergeants. Personally, I want an enhanced level of training and understanding of the mental health system. Systematically, I want continuous improvement in the relationships with our mental health partners."

Jim
Stegemeyer

BHU
MCU Officer