

The Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) News

Suicide is an enormously impactful, yet preventable, public health issue. September is National Suicide Prevention Month and September 10 was World Suicide Prevention Day.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 3000 people on average commit suicide daily. Furthermore, it is estimated that during 2012 for each adult who died of suicide there were 27 others who made suicide attempts. As you can see from the chart below, it is a serious problem in Portland as well.

The BHU is constantly working to raise awareness that suicide is preventable, to improve education about suicide, to share information about available resources for those in such a mental health crisis and to decrease the stigma associated with mental illness.

For more information on statistics and resources related to the issue of suicide, please visit the BHU website (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/62135>).



BHU Stories From The Field

On August 4, 2014, East Precinct officers responded to a call reporting that a 32-year-old male was holding a rifle to his head.

Multiple officers, including officers assigned to the Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT), responded to the area. As officers were arriving, the reporting party told 9-1-1 that the individual was outside the residence firing the rifle. Several officers heard the shots as they arrived in the area.

Based on the initial information and officers' observations, the Special Emergency Reaction Team (SERT) and the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) were activated as well.

After engaging with the ECIT officers, the individual put down his rifle. Officers were able to effectively communicate with him and deescalate the situation. The man was safely taken into custody and transported to a Portland hospital for treatment.

Officers found evidence of gunfire but did not locate any injured parties as a result of this incident.

Help is available for community members struggling from a mental health crisis and/or suicidal thoughts.

The BHU wants you to know that suicide is preventable. There are resources available at:

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/63941>.

2013 Suicide Statistics

In 2013, Portland Police officers responded to calls on a total of 92 completed suicides.

To put this number in some perspective, there were a total of 16 murders and 35 traffic fatalities reported to the Portland Police Bureau during the same time period.

Thus, there were nearly twice as many deaths by suicide than by the other two causes combined.



BHU Pins

Starting in September, Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT) officers will wear a pin on their uniform so that community members can more easily recognize them as having specialty training in dealing with persons who are experiencing a mental health/behavioral crisis.

ECIT officers are dispatched to calls if the call has a mental health component and:

- The subject is violent
- The subject has a weapon
- The call is at a known mental health facility
- The subject is identified as a potential Suicidal “jumper”
- Upon the request of a responding officer
- Upon the request of a citizen



The additional training ECIT officers receive includes: the indicators of mental illness; crisis communication skills; interaction with consumers and family members; and education on community resources. It also features the practice of scenario-based training and the application of patrol tactics to persons in behavioral crisis.

Meet Shannon Pullen



Shannon
Pullen
BHUAC
Chair

Shannon Pullen is the current Chair of the Behavioral Health Unit Advisory Committee (BHUAC). The purpose of the BHUAC is to provide guidance to assist the City of Portland and the Portland Police Bureau in the development and expansion of the Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT), Mobile Crisis Units (MCUs), Service Coordination Team (SCT), Bureau of Emergency Communication crisis call response, and utilization of community mental health services.

Previously, Shannon was the Interim Executive Director of NAMI Multnomah, the local Portland chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Prior to this, Shannon worked for various non-profits such as the Oregon Food Bank and Mercy Corps International. She has also volunteered on numerous committees and advisory boards, including the Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board.

Shannon’s interests lie in healing and transformation—both on the individual level and as families, communities and groups. Through her work with NAMI, she was privileged to be part of this process with people who enroll in the Family-to-Family Class. She states, “I really enjoy being able to talk about the “untalkable” and being able to share our real experiences as people and family members dealing with mental health issues.”

Furthermore, Shannon states, "That's why it's such a privilege for me to be a part of the BHUAC. We have the right stakeholders with the right experience from all different levels – systemic, political and personal – engaged in healthy dialogue and exchange around very difficult topics. We are fortunate in that we have a deeply committed group of people on this committee with a wide range of opinions and experiences. I have learned so much in my time working with this group. ”

One of the larger issues Shannon believes the BHUAC is facing is the very high-profile nature of the events leading up to the creation of the BHU, which has raised a lot of emotions among stakeholders. She states, “I take seriously the charge to engage and incorporate meaningful community input and balance that against actionable, real-life recommendations we can make. I am proud of our committee and believe it is serving the community well.”

In terms of success thus far, Shannon highlights the impact the BHUAC has had on the development and expansion of the Enhanced Crisis Intervention Training. “We were asked to be a part of the process from the beginning, and we’ve had very active participation from the initial concept to the second annual round of training. It has been encouraging to work with a very responsive Behavioral Health Unit and to build relationships with an incredible group of dedicated officers.”