

Behavioral Health Unit Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2017

Committee Members

***Lt. Chris Wheelwright** BHU; PPB, **Sgt. Todd Tackett** PPB; **Sgt. Casey Hettman** PPB; ***Ofc. Jason Jones**, PPB CIT; **Emily Rochon**, PPB SCT; **Shannon Pullen**, National Alliance on Mental Illness; **Bill Osborne**, Multnomah County Behavioral Health; **Cristina Nieves**, Commissioner Fritz's Office; ***Maggie Bennington-Davis**, Health Share of OR; ***Felesia Otis**, Volunteers of America; ***Jan Friedman**, Disability Rights Oregon; **Kathleen Roy**, Central City Concern; ***Beth Epps**, Cascadia; **Katie Burgard** Multnomah County Sherriff's Office; **Mike Morris**, Oregon Health Authority Addictions & Mental Health Division; **Melanie Payne**, Bureau Of Emergency Communications, **Janie Marsh**, Mental Health America of Oregon, **Alex Bassos**, Metropolitan Public Defender's Office; **Leticia Sainz**, Multnomah County Mental Health & Addiction Services; ***Wyndham McNair**, Case Manager CCC

Guests: ECIT Officers Timothy Bacon, William Ollenbrook and Kyle Hefley

[* Indicates Committee Member was absent]

September Minutes & Report

The September minutes were discussed. Leticia Sainz moved to accept them and Kathleen Roy seconded the motion. The motion passed.

M/S/P

The September report was discussed. Melanie Payne moved to accept them and Bill Osborne seconded the motion. The motion passed.

M/S/P

Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT) Officer Q & A

Officers Timothy Bacon, William Ollenbrook and Kyle Hefley shared about their experiences as ECIT officers. They discussed their backgrounds and what drew them to becoming an ECIT officer.

Following are some highlights from the discussion:

- These officer saw significant improvement in the curriculum in the last round of ECIT Training, in terms of its impact on their daily work.
- These officers have seen a significant cultural shift in the Portland Police Bureau over the last five years, with the changing focus of police work and officer attitudes about police work.
- The disengagement protocol was cited as an example of how change has occurred. Officers noted there is more focus on what is causing the issues that have brought police to the scene.
- These officers believe the voluntary aspect of the ECIT program is important as not every officer is interested in being an ECIT officer and not everyone has the skill set to do the tasks needed.

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- These officers believe every officer should have the basic skills needed to be an officer in today's Bureau and noted there are many tools and resources all PPB officers receive through In-Service trainings, but being an ECIT officer takes more in-depth knowledge of the system.
- Officers spend significant time on crisis calls and believe there is an increase in the number of these calls. The increase over the last few years could be due to the increase number of houseless people living on the street or the fact that we now recognize someone is in crisis and officers are not just addressing the criminal issue.
- One member noticed an overall positive change in the way officers address the clientele at their mental health treatment facility.
- There was a discussion about interactions between ECIT officers and staff at mental health service provider organizations. This discussion included a conversation about expectations, rationale for why staff call for police assistance, legal limitations and restraints on the part of the officers, and ways for those interactions to go as well as possible even during difficult situations. If an interaction with an ECIT officer is going poorly despite everyone's best effort, it is possible to request another ECIT officer if one is available or ask for a Sergeant.
- There was a discussion about the duties of ECIT officers. All ECIT officers are also street officers, and therefore are responsible for handling calls within their district during their shift. If they are on an ECIT call for 3 hours, the officers in the neighboring districts try to help, but with the current volume of calls vs. staffing ratio, the calls can stack up and response time suffers. The last class of ECIT officers helped the call load, especially on the weekends. At times there was only one ECIT officer in the City during certain shifts.
- There was a discussion about the challenges and disincentives for being an ECIT officer. There is no pay increase and there is a large increase in the amount of paperwork required of an ECIT officer. These officers agreed that keeping the voluntary nature of this program is still important for attracting the right officers with the right skills for the job. Being primary on calls and the requirement to write a report on every call with a mental health component are the biggest challenges. Many officers who are ECIT feel overwhelmed. It is also disheartening when an officer does everything possible and 3 hours later that officer sees the same person on the street again.
- One committee member asked if the proposed CSO (Community Safety Officer) program could take some of the report writing duties off the ECIT officers. Unfortunately, the officers have to cover so many data points and write reports in such detail there is no easy way for another person to write their firsthand account of what occurred.
- These ECIT officers wished the community at large understood that the police are not actually a part of the mental health system. They also noted that PPB is on the cutting edge of dealing with people in crisis but there is a large disconnect with how the public views what PPB is doing.
- These officers believe finding ways to decrease paperwork and the amount of report writing would encourage more officers to apply as well as maintain their status as an ECIT officer.
- One idea discussed is having specific cars marked as ECIT cars instead of district officers, although it was noted they would require better staffing.

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- ECIT officers wear a small pin that says ECIT on it, but there is not a large badge or patch to easily identify them as such.

Unity Presentation Follow-Up

The committee discussed challenges to the new transportation protocols for getting people in behavioral health crisis to Unity, including:

- Lack of training among emergency services staff around communication with people in behavioral health crisis and de-escalation skills
- Difficulty in transitioning from police to emergency services
- Need for strapping someone down fully in order to be transported by emergency services vs. being handcuffed in a police car
- Some emergency services staff are being assaulted by more combative clients
- Lack of buy-in across the board by all emergency services staff re: new protocols
- Lack of clarity for who is responsible to go on and during calls
- Lack of input from emergency services about the rules that were adopted by the PPB
- Lack of option to go to the hospital or Unity on hold with a police officer
- If they are going on director's hold, they have to go via emergency services
- "The system" is used to police officers playing a certain roll during these calls, and it seems to be having issues adjusting to the change
- Does the person being transported end up with a bill? Who's paying?
- Data is being lost in transit. When the officer hands the client to the AMR employee, and then that employee hands the person to Unity, it's like a long game of telephone. Doctors aren't always seeing what the police officer saw. Emergency services is not willing to go to court to testify at hold hearings.

One member noted that AMR has to transport people in restraints on a gurney. This system is more hands on and possibly more traumatic than being driven to the hospital in the back of a police car. Another committee member noted the new transportation method was thought to be more humane than having a police officer do the transport. However, the restraint issue did not come up when the rule was written. Finally, one committee member suggested we invite a representative from the Unity Transport Group to attend a future BHUAC meeting and discuss these issues outlined above.

December Meeting Planning

The December meeting will focus planning for the upcoming year. Please bring any ideas you have or anything you want covered to that meeting.

The next BHUAC meeting will be on December 6, 2017 at 2:00 PM at the Portland Police Bureau's Central Precinct, 11th floor BHU Meeting Room.