



POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF WHITE LAKE

DANIEL T. KELLER
CHIEF OF POLICE

August 12, 2024

Rik Kowall, Township Supervisor
White Lake Township

RE: LAKES AREA CO-RESPONDER PROGRAM

In the year 2020, as was the case nation-wide, the White Lake Township Police Department began to notice an uptick in mental health related calls-for-service. During the time period between June, 2019 and June, 2020 (COVID onset), the White Lake Township Police Department responded to nine (9) attempt suicides, two-hundred-eighteen (218) family trouble incidents, sixty-eight (68) mental health related calls, twenty (20) naloxone administered incidents, five-hundred-sixty-three (563) welfare checks, and three (3) drug overdose related calls-for-service. And, in total, members of the White Lake Township Police Department responded to one-thousand twenty-four (1,024) verified offenses specifically related to mental health issues, including family trouble incidents, mental health calls, walkaways, Narcan administered calls, overdoses, suicides, welfare checks, and domestic violence calls-for-service. As a result of the high number of calls related to mental health and substance abuse issues, the White Lake Township Police Department began a police/mental health collaboration with Common Ground of Oakland County. According to an article published by NPR in 2020, it was estimated that at least 20% of police calls-for-service involved a mental health or substance use crisis. Also, in a nationwide survey of more than 2,400 senior law enforcement officials conducted by the Naval Postgraduate School, around 84% of senior law enforcement officials said mental health related calls have increased in their careers, and 63% said the amount of time their department spends on mental illness calls has also increased. More than half of those surveyed reported the increased time is due to the inability to refer people to needed treatment. Additionally, the American Psychological Association recognizes that referring individuals to the appropriate mental health resources – and following up on progress-takes time and resources that already strain police, especially those from smaller departments.

The White Lake Township Police/Mental Health collaboration with Common Ground was initiated in order to put people experiencing mental health or substance abuse crisis in direct contact with the services available that could better assist White Lake residents with their specific crisis. As most of those calls-for-service are not criminal in nature, typical police services were not properly equipped to assist those in need. The referral program that was developed with Common Ground, as part of that police/mental health collaboration addressed the inability of police officers to assist individuals with long-term resolution to their personal mental health or substance abuse problems. The goals of the referral program were to reduce repeat calls-for-service to the same individuals, provide thorough and specific crisis related services to community residents, identify and utilize community resources to their fullest, provide a balanced approach to mental health, domestic violence, and suicidal ideation within the community, identify victims of human trafficking, reduce societal expectations of police, reduce departmental liability and use-of-force situations, and to identify police officer mental health issues and prevent officer suicide.

The police/mental health collaboration with Common Ground through the Referral Program established the following Mission Statement:

The White Lake Township Police Department – Mental Health Collaboration seeks to adequately address, reduce, and prevent mental health issues, domestic violence, and suicidal ideation concerns through a direct one-to-one working collaboration between members of the White Lake Township Police Department and mental health experts and suicide specialists.

The proper identification of mental health issues, domestic violence situations, suicidal ideation concerns and direct referral of those issues to established resources can better address and/or solve on-going issues, reduce repeat calls-for-service, and improve the overall quality of life throughout the White Lake Township community.

The initial Referral Program established with Common Ground was funded in full by a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) Grant in the amount of \$1 million over a three (3) year period covering the years 2020 – 2023. The grant funds, and time period, have since expired; as Common Ground did not renew the grant upon its expiration. Despite the non-renewal of the SAMSHA grant, Common Ground has continued the referral program; however, the program no longer has a specific full-time employee designated to long-term follow-up with individuals that choose to remain in the referral program. The follow-up program is now filtered through Common Ground's Crisis Helpline. Common Ground continues its goal of following-up with those individuals that have been referred by members of the White Lake Township Police Department; however, long-term follow-up contact and statistics of those that remain in the program, or begin long-term treatment programs, are no longer maintained. The Referral Program, in its current state, although beneficial to police officers as a means to provide improved services to residents of White Lake Township, no longer provides the access to long-term follow-up and citizen contacts, thus it is short on meeting the initial goals as set by the Mission Statement of the Police/Mental Health Collaboration established in 2020. In order to better serve the citizens of White Lake Township, improve police services, and continue to address the initial goals of that collaboration established with Common Ground, the White Lake Township Police Department has sought out the means to more thoroughly continue, improve, and expand the mental health and substance abuse crisis services experienced on a daily basis by residents of White Lake. In order to continue to meet those goals, the White Lake Township Police Department is seeking to expand its service capabilities through a social clinician Co-Responder Program in conjunction with the Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN).

The Co-Responder Model is deployed utilizing two methods, the Ride-Along Model and the Self-Deployed Model. In each instance, a trained clinician works through the White Lake Township Police Department, providing direct contact with residents in crisis, directly supporting police officers on calls-for-service with in-person assistance, and monitoring residents' need for long-term mental health and substance abuse services through individual designed follow-up contact with that clinician.

The Ride-Along Model allows for the trained clinician to work directly with an assigned patrol officer during their shifts. Clinicians can complete mental health petitions on scene and immediately when needed, allowing officers the time to return to normal patrol and call-for-service response assignments. In this model, clinicians will have access to Probate Court, are capable of conducting follow-up services with the assistance of a certified police officer, and clinicians will have direct access to police resources, as well as individual health records and can access insurance/Medicare status.

The Self-Deployed Model involves the monitoring of CAD or Radio traffic for self-deployment to scenes requiring the specific assistance of a mental health or substance abuse social clinician. Clinicians can also be dispatched to specific scenes in need of services outside of law enforcement. The presence of a trained clinician on mental health or substance abuse related incidents will reduce the amount of time on calls for officers. Both the Ride-Along and Self-Deployed Model reduce repeat police calls-for-service, and both models increase access to behavioral health system for residents.

The new collaboration with Oakland Community Health Network will provide direct and personalized social clinician services to the citizens of White Lake Township. Due to the wide-ranging issues faced by communities nationwide the new program should be conducted in a collaborative manner, therefore, the clinician will be shared with the Walled Lake, Wolverine Lake, and Wixom communities. For the first year, 100% of the costs for the full-time social services clinician will be covered by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 grant, funded through Oakland County Board of Commissioners. In addition, 100% of the costs for the social clinician services will be covered for another three years via the 2023 Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Grant Contract, extending fully-funded social clinician services for the citizens of White Lake Township through September, 2027. In addition to the funding benefits, OCHN will be the primary employer of the social clinician, thereby taking on the responsibility of hiring, training, and providing the social clinician with additional fringe benefits. By employing the social services clinician through OCHN, the White Lake Township Police Department is free from the responsibility of hiring the social clinician, although our department will have a say in the final approval of the hired clinician, as well as their scheduling with the White Lake Township Police Department.

Therefore, based on the amount of mental health and substance abuse related calls-for-service, the identified benefits of referring individuals in crisis directly to services that are prepared to identify and assist people with their individual focused crisis issues, the 100% funding of the position for four (4) years, and the opportunity to work directly with a specific social services clinician within the White Lake Township community, I highly recommend the implementation of the Co-Responder Program in collaboration with Oakland Community Health Network.

Sincerely,



Daniel T. Keller
Chief of Police