



Cochise County
Mental Health Support Team

A Growing Crisis

- The treatment of those suffering from a mental illness in the United States is inconsistent and inadequate. This reactive approach to addressing the mental health needs of our community results in devastating outcomes such as increased hospital readmissions, overuse of law enforcement who may not have training in the areas of response to mental health crisis, death by suicide, or hazardous events for the community.

Mental Health; a growing crisis

With increasing frequency, resources from the Cochise County Sheriff's Office must be re-allocated to address mental health concerns. This growing trend is not sustainable without a serious course correction. These Mental Health concerns include, but are not limited to:

- Deputies responding to a citizen who is experiencing a mental health crisis. Deputies arrive, render the scene safe, then activate the Crisis Response Team. At times, this takes a Deputy from other duties from 1-6 hours, leaving many parts of our community with no other law enforcement.
- Deputies must transport "Title 36" patients from Cochise County to Tucson, consuming 2-4 hours of time per transport 2-10 times per week. This either results in the accrual of overtime or reducing staffing levels of Deputies on the road.
- Deputies are unable to provide any mental health first aid for members of our community who don't meet the criteria for receiving assistance from one of the existing crisis mobile teams. This often leads to increased incarceration and recidivism, which increases the burden on local tax-payers.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team: A Better Practice for Responses.



Responding to someone in crisis requires:

- An empathetic response to the incident for what it is; a medical crisis and not necessarily a crime.
- A non-uniformed mental health professional with specific training in detection and de-escalation, resulting in a less frictional event from a responder who is treatment-focused as opposed to the enforcement of laws.
- The use of Crisis Intervention Techniques to deescalate the event and have the person seek treatment

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 1

Hire an appropriate Lead Behavioral Health Professional

- A) Create policies and procedures consistent with National Standards.
- B) Create a needs assessment focused on recognizing patterns and or other factors to determine the most efficient use of resources.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 2

Lead Behavioral Health Professional will:

- A) Hire two additional Behavioral Health Professionals.
- B) Hire plain clothes detention officer to perform Title 36 transports.
- C) Purchase vehicles and equipment required to support the Team.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 3

- A) Extrapolate statistical data from needs assessment to create schedule and staffing assignments.
- B) Collaborate with external partners to determine best allocation of resources in Cochise County.
- C) Collaborate with CCSO Jail and CAO GRACe to meet the needs of the targeted population.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 4

A) Send BHPs to “Train the Trainer” courses in Crisis Intervention Techniques, Suicide Prevention, and Identification of Mental Illness in oneself and others.

B) Begin plan to train all Deputies assigned to Patrol Operations in Crisis Intervention Techniques over the course of 3 years (40-hour class)

C) Collaborate with regional law enforcement Agencies to train their officers on Crisis Intervention Techniques.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 5

- A) Continue to collect statistical data from each contact and continue to reassess the allocation of resources.
- B) Assess the effectiveness of the program to include the reduction in the use of County resources since the implementation of the MHST.
- C) Provide a bi-annual, detailed report/presentation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the findings of such data.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 6

A) Aggressively seek out and apply for grants to continue the program past three years or augment the existing program to be more effective.

Cochise County Mental Health Support Team in action.

Step 7

A) Share the successes of the fiscally responsible approach to servicing the community while treating mental illness for what it is: a medical condition and not a crime.

-
- With your support of this self-sustained program, we can take a pro-active approach to addressing the mental health of citizens in our communities at zero cost to the Cochise County Taxpayer.
 - Thank you for your time and continued support.