



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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September 4, 2024

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RE: RCW 36.28A.440—Mental Health Field Response Grant Program

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Steven D. Strachan
Executive Director

Chief Clerk Dean and Secretary Bannister:

Per RCW 36.28A.440, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs is submitting its annual report on the Mental Health Field Response Teams Program. This report is submitted in compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

Please direct questions to Jamie Weimer at 360-486-2419 or jweimer@waspc.org.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Strachan
Executive Director

MENTAL HEALTH FIELD RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM—ANNUAL REPORT (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

Introduction

The Washington Legislature continues its commitment to fund the Mental Health Field Response (MHFR) Teams Program. For the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, the legislature allocated \$4 million, with \$3.5 million earmarked for programs in Trueblood Regions 1 and 2 and \$500,000 for all other programs. In addition to these funds, the Washington Health Care Authority (HCA) awarded the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) \$1 million to assist in the implementation of elements of the *Trueblood Settlement Agreement*¹ for the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

WASPC operates the MHFR program as outlined in RCW 36.28A.440². The purpose of the program is to assist local law enforcement to establish and/or expand mental health field response capabilities, utilizing mental health professionals (MHPs) to respond to persons with behavioral health issues professionally, humanely, and safely to provide treatment, diversion, and to reduce incarceration.

With a 2021 change in statute³, WASPC is required to submit an annual report to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature on the program by September 1 of each year the program is funded. WASPC's report includes information on the grant recipients, use of funds, participation of mental health professionals, and feedback from the grant recipients for the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

This report concludes with lessons learned and recommendations. While the Mental Health Field Response Program supports local communities to respond to persons with behavioral health issues professionally, humanely, and safely, there is room for improvement. MHFR grant recipients routinely report the need for more mental health providers, more housing resources, more treatment beds, and more resources to address the basic needs of community members in crisis.

Grants to Use Sequential Intercept Model

WASPC has focused MHFR grants on programs where crisis intervention trained MHPs are immediately available to officers or to respond in person when called. Additionally, mental health field response programs are required to include staff and short-term services to reduce the likelihood the individual will have future criminal justice system involvement.

WASPC adopted the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Intercept 1⁴ as part of the original grant requirements in 2018. The SIM is used by many stakeholders as a guide to behavioral health service system transformation, and more specifically as a tool to identify strategies to better respond to the

¹ [Trueblood et al v. Washington State DSHS | DSHS](#)

² [RCW 36.28A.440: Mental health field response grant program. \(wa.gov\)](#)

³ [5092-S.SL.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#) (see sec. 218(5))

⁴ [Criminal Justice System Sequential Intercept Model | SAMHSA](#)

needs of people with behavioral health conditions who come into contact with the criminal justice system. This model consists of five points of interception (Intercept 0—Community Service; Intercept 1—Law Enforcement; Intercept 2—Initial Court Hearings/Initial Detention; Intercept 3—Jails/Courts; Intercept 4—Reentry; and Intercept 5—Community Corrections) at which one might intervene to prevent vulnerable individuals from deeper involvement with the justice system.

Intercept 1: Law Enforcement—Pre-Arrest Diversion. The first point of intercept includes interactions with law enforcement personnel, who sometimes serve as first responders during mental health emergencies and can be key partners to behavioral health and emergency services personnel. Interventions at this intercept have in the past been largely focused on the education and training of police officers in their capacity as first responders. WASPC went beyond training and added the component of co-response with MHPs to Intercept 1 through this grant program.

Mental Health Field Response Grants: July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

The WASPC Mental Health Field Response Grant Review Committee met in May and June 2023 and awarded grants to the following agencies for the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 (FY'24) and July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 (FY'25). WASPC recognized the challenges faced by programs that are funded on a single fiscal year basis. We hoped that allocating two-year awards would allow each program to focus on service provision, rather than maintaining funding. The move also provided staffing stability and allowed programs to be more competitive in recruiting.

Grant Review Committee Members included: Everett Maroon (Blue Mountain Heart to Heart), Sheriff Joe Kriete (Grant County Sheriff's Office), Jolene Kron (Salish Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization), Chief Ken Seuberlich (Bothell Police Department), Chief Ron Harding (Poulsbo Police Department), Sheriff Paul Budrow (Okanogan County Sheriff's Office), Siobhan Brown (Community Health Plan of Washington), Jamie Weimer (WASPC), and Steven Briggs (WASPC).

Grant Awards—Lead Agency	FY'24 Award Amount	FY'24 Amount Spent	FY'25 Award Amount
Airway Heights Police Department	\$735,199.48	\$716,890.99	\$630,431.87
Chelan County Sheriff's Office	\$490,530.52	\$272,373.47	\$504,892.76
Clallam County Sheriff's Office*	\$71,000.00	\$8,427.07	\$ 536,749.28
Kirkland Police Department	\$177,883.84	\$96,805.16	\$ 549,954.52
Longview Police Department	\$336,440.45	\$231,085.20	\$362,282.57
Port Angeles Police Department**	\$466,802.94	\$466,106.27	\$0.00
Spokane County Sheriff's Office	\$1,985,526.78	\$1,735,973.19	\$1,791,106.97
Total	\$4,285,200.07	\$3,527,661.35	\$4,340,861.04

*The Clallam County Sheriff's Office was awarded funds effective March 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024 and July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 after a second request for application process to award unallocated funds following the initial application process.

**The Port Angeles Police Department assigned the remainder of the award to the Clallam County Sheriff's Office for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Airway Heights Police Department (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Cheney Police Department

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$716,890.99
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	523
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	1,418

The Airway Heights Police Department (AHPD), along with the Cheney Police Department (CPD), was awarded funds for two full-time Co-Responders and two full-time police officers to create two Crisis Response Units, collectively called the West Plains Crisis Response Team.

The goal of the West Plains Crisis Response Team is to deploy licensed mental health professionals to safely mitigate behavioral health crises in the community by responding to mental health crises in the West Plains region, including Cheney, Airway Heights, Medical Lake, and nearby Tribal lands, and to provide short-term case management for those individuals with chronic mental illness or those who need resource connection.

The Crisis Response Team responds during regular business hours and works together to provide coverage two weekends per month and some evenings.

The West Plains Crisis Response Team added a crisis canine named Tonks to the team in February 2024. K9 Tonks provides emotional support and comfort to program participants.

The West Plains Crisis Response Team has published a video highlighting their efforts in the community. Use the QR code to access the video.

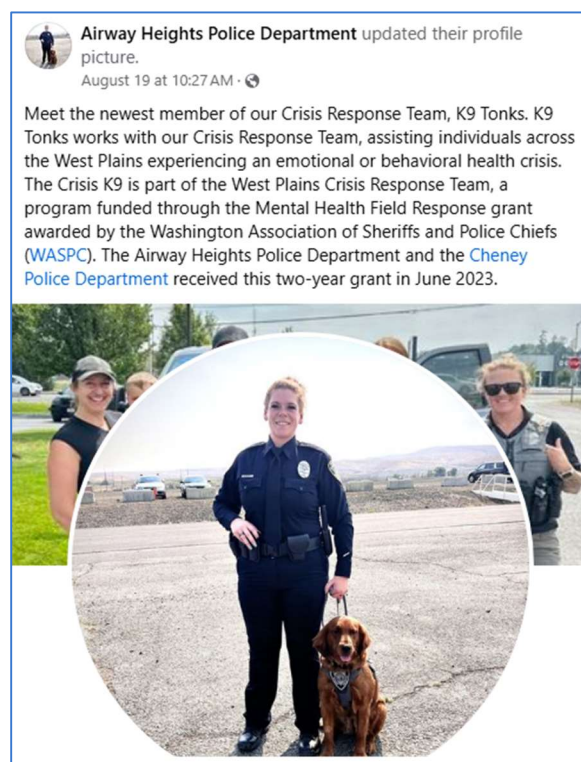


Figure 1 Photo Courtesy Airway Heights Police Department Facebook Page

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

"On [redacted] the West Plains Crisis Response Team (CRT) responded to a welfare check at the Airway Heights courthouse. CRT was advised that a female was sleeping outside of the courtroom and needed checked on. Upon arrival, CRT recognized the female who is well known to AHPD and other

agencies in the area.

The [she] has a significant history of drug use, homelessness, mental health conditions, and crisis calls for service. Additionally, [she] often refuses services and offered resources. CRT has attempted to get her into treatment and shelter since the program's inception April 2023. Although she has often refused services CRT has continued to outreach her and build rapport and trust by providing her with crisis resource kits, bus passes, and snacks/water.

Prior to this call, the [individual] had generated 10 calls for service just from January 1st 2024. These calls were county wide and not just within Airway Heights' jurisdiction requiring officers/deputies from multiple agencies to respond. [She] often presents with internal stimuli and concerns for grave disability (i.e. inappropriate clothing) and although has been hospitalized involuntarily several times, has continued to return to the same pattern of behavior, requiring ongoing first responder resources.

When approached by CRT [she] was emotional and complaining of being cold and hungry. After extensive conversation regarding services and concerns of current lifestyle CRT inquired into her interest in going to a stabilization unit for inpatient mental health and substance use treatment. [She] was agreeable to this and transported there by CRT.

Since her intake, [she] has completed the initial program and was recently admitted into the facility's co-occurring program. As of today, [she] is still in treatment and working with the facility on long term housing and case management."

May 2024 Airway Heights Monthly Report

Chelan County Sheriff's Office (Lead Agency)

Partnering with East Wenatchee Police Department, Wenatchee Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Chelan County Regional Jail

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$272,373.47
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	1,198
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	5,822

The Behavioral Health Unit housed at the Chelan County Sheriff's Office is an embedded co-response team, which gives law enforcement access to a Mental Health Professional and Case Manager.

The goals and objectives of the BHU are to provide outreach services to individuals experiencing acute emotional crises, to divert the individual from incarceration or hospitalization into the least restrictive setting possible, and to conduct assessments across systems to determine eligibility for diversion into safe and appropriate treatment options. When appropriate, the BHU coordinates requests with the crisis team for evaluation under the Involuntary Treatment Act and appropriately utilize crisis intervention techniques for individual and community stabilization.

The BHU responds to calls and provides problem identification, crisis interventions, referrals, and links to resources for individuals in Chelan and Douglas County. The BHU provides face-to-face interventions and, short-term, transitional case management and limited assessments.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

“BHU received a referral for a female who presented at the Chelan County Sheriff’s Office. Office staff were concerned about her mental health due to the comments she made during their interaction.

The BHU met with the female who reported that she was attempting to report abuse and, most recently, a jar of skin left by another resident at a shelter. After further conversation, [she] shared her story with the BHU, including significant medical and mental health history, with experience of abuse and trauma.

[She] had generated several calls to multiple law enforcement agencies for calls related to people stalking or following her, with increased paranoia with time. She provided contact information for her sister, who lived in the area and agreed to the BHU assisting her with further care.

The BHU contacted the sister, who reported that [she] has schizophrenia and she has been living in the shelters. She requested resources for housing, and the BHU was able to add the female to the Coordinated Entry (Housing System).

The BHU provided follow-up calls and support on navigating barriers [she] and her sister encountered. After several weeks of diverting calls to the BHU instead of law enforcement, the sister called the Sheriff’s Office to report that her sister had found housing and had been living in a hotel for 90 days as she awaited her long-term housing assistance. The family was happy that [she] received the right help and no longer called 911 as her form of support.”

2023-2024 Chelan Annual Report

Clallam County Sheriff’s Office (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Port Angeles Police Department

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$8,427.07
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	0
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	0

The Clallam County Sheriff’s Office was awarded funds effective March 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024 and July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 after a second request for application process. The Port Angeles Police Department assigned the remainder of the award to the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Use the QR code to view a May 20, 2024 article highlighting the Clallam County program expansion.



Kirkland Police Department (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Shoreline Police Department, Kenmore Police Department, Lake Forest Park Police Department and Bothell Police Department



Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$96,805.16
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	98
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	123

Kirkland Police Department, and the other agencies requested continued funds for their Regional Crisis Response (RCR) Agency, formally the Response, Awareness, De-escalation, & Referral (RADAR) Navigator Program. The goals of RCR were to:

- Reduce solo police response to behavioral health calls by providing alternatives, in appropriate instances, of Mental Health Professional (MHP) social workers joining police in responding to calls from community members in crisis.
- Support and advise public safety dispatch agencies over time as these agencies develop and adopt dispatch protocols for mobile crisis responders utilizing both the 911 and 988 systems.
- Reduce strain on police and fire departments by reducing repeat calls from community members in crisis while expanding toward a 24-hour coverage for the five North King County cities.
- Refer and navigate people to the community of care to reduce reliance on the crisis system, and work with Connections Crisis Facility as a diversion opportunity for law enforcement.

The RCR Agency gives police vital assistance when they respond to calls that involve persons with behavioral health issues. A Crisis Responder MHP works side-by-side with an officer, to provide immediate crisis intervention, more sophisticated diagnostic assessment and follow up.

In the final months of the fiscal year, the RCR Agency has continued work toward the objective of integrating response plans created in the navigator database (created by the RADAR program and NORCOM staff) into NORCOM's computer-aided dispatch aggregator, to make the response plans dynamic and accessible to officers and deputies. Response plan links and access via will be beta tested in Kirkland in the coming quarter with the support of the Kirkland Neighborhood Resource Officer.

Use the QR code to learn more about the RCR Agency.	Use the QR code to view a July 12, 2024 Seattle Times article highlighting the RCR Agency.
	

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

“One WASPC-reimbursed Crisis Responder worked with a young woman who was sexually assaulted at her school, working with her to create a plan for her ability to continue to stay in school in spite of the trauma it represents for her. The Crisis Responders also worked with support providers at her school to help them provide the best possible support for her.”

June 2024 Kirkland Monthly Report

Longview Police Department (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Kelso Police Department, Kalama Police Department, Woodland Police Department, Castle Rock Police Department, and Cowlitz County Sheriff’s Office

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$231,085.20
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	428
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	2,468

The Longview Police Department, with all the law enforcement agencies in Cowlitz County, along with partner agency Columbia Wellness was awarded funds to continue a coordinated Mental Health Field Response Team.

The City of Longview dedicated funds through the city’s general fund budget to hire two crisis response specialists to work in Longview Police Department’s Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) to respond with Longview Police Officers to calls where individuals are in crisis.

With these grant funds, two additional mental health professionals worked as part of a countywide approach to provide immediate triage and access to cognitive and behavioral health resources.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

“The presenting male is [an elderly] military veteran [redacted]. Fortunately, the participant’s friend contacted dispatch with a request for a welfare check, due to concerns that [he] was suicidal. BHU first made a phone contact. The participant stated that he would be dead from severe alcohol use before the VA was able to get him placed in a treatment facility. Also, [he] had intrusive thoughts of killing himself and access to the means (two loaded pistols next to his chair and a shotgun at the end of the hall). He refused [to go] to the hospital.

BHU co-responded to the residence. The officer secured and removed the firearms for safe keeping. The participant was responsive to BHU intervention and safety planning. [He] gave permission for BHU to coordinate with his VA providers. While on scene, BHU communicated his immediate need for placement to his nurse practitioner and social worker.

The participant was hungry and did not have food in the home. BHU provided food, and planned for check-ins until he was placed in treatment. He also was provided with the Crisis Line 24-hr line if he

needed immediate assistance in BHUs absence. The crisis intervention was successful as the participant reported feeling better, after the encounter.

BHU continued to follow-up with the participant and his VA social worker until his placement was confirmed. The placement was confirmed on [redacted].”

January 2024 Longview Monthly Report

Port Angeles Police Department (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Sequim Police Department and Clallam County Sheriff’s Office

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$466,106.27
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	1,007
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	4,611

The Port Angeles Police Department (PAPD) continued to partner with the Olympic Peninsula Community Clinic (OPCC) and designed a coordinated response program called REdisCOVERY to address the needs of persons with behavioral health issues. PAPD encounters persons multiple times a day who need services that often include both short and long-term mental health services. PAPD found that persons referred or newly introduced to services showed a much higher rate of follow-through than those for whom services were simply recommended.

The REdisCOVERY program partnership between PAPD and OPCC started in 2017. The REdisCOVERY program’s objective is to expand resources available to the program in the form of additional trained staff that coordinates outreach efforts between PAPD, OPCC, the Port Angeles Fire Department, the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office, and the Sequim Police Department.

Effective July 1, 2024, the Port Angeles Police Department has assigned their Mental Health Field Response Grant to the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office. The Clallam County Sheriff’s Office continues to partner with OPCC for this important work in the greater Clallam County area.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

This month I wanted to highlight [redacted]. I first met [redacted (participant)] [in] the first few weeks of working with Rediscovery. I was doing outreach with [redacted (staff member)] and we stopped by a car behind Safeway to talk with a few guys that she was familiar with. [Redacted (participant)] had just overdosed a couple days before this and he was in obvious discomfort. He wouldn’t look me in the eye when I introduced myself.

Over the course of the next few months I would run into [redacted (participant)] several times at the HRHC (Harm Reduction Health Clinic) and eventually he let me know that he was tired of the life he was living and wanted to go to treatment. I scheduled several bed dates for him and each time, when it was time for him to go, [redacted (participant)] was nowhere to be found. He would say the words, “I am ready to go,” but it appeared to me that he was still on the fence about the idea.

Fast forward to early December and we received a referral from the jail that [redacted (participant)]

was in custody and wanted to go to treatment. I asked to take this on since I had previous experience working with him. This time around there was something different about him. We did a new assessment and throughout our visit, when he spoke to me, he looked me in the eye. He spoke with conviction and let me know that this time he is ready. Regardless of the outcome, I saw something different in him. I saw hope.”

December 2023 Port Angeles Monthly Report

Spokane County Sheriff’s Office (Lead Agency)

Partnering with Spokane Police Department and Spokane Valley Police Department

Program Stats	
Funds utilized during reporting period:	\$1,735,973.19
Unique/unduplicated participants served during reporting period:	1,841
Total contacts with participants served during reporting period:	5,542

The Spokane County Sheriff and Spokane Police Department joint program’s goal was to create a patrol-based unit to address calls for service regarding individuals who are in behavioral health crisis. By pairing officers with master’s level clinicians, the program addresses the needs of high utilizers before they require emergency interventions, helping to reduce recidivism, emergency room visits, and incarceration. This approach also builds rapport and mitigates potentially high-risk situations.

The unit has significantly impacted patrol operations, providing valuable support to local law enforcement. Long-term solutions have been identified for high utilizers and, while still a work in progress, many of the identified high utilizers have reduced their calls for service to patrol. The program continues to identify needs on patrol and implement changes.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

“I dispatched myself to a suicidal male call.

A female called in to report that she got a call from her friend A.H. A.H. told the complainant he was out driving his motorcycle and was going to kill himself. He told her that he was going to drive his motorcycle into oncoming traffic. A.H.’s phone was tracked, and the location was provided to State Patrol and myself. He was located behind a convenience store where we had tracked him to. The State Patrol checked out with him and awaited my arrival. I learned that A.H. was depressed, and drug addicted. He wanted to get clean but had gone to treatment before and found it difficult to get back in. A.H. had thought that suicide was an option and was strongly considering it. A.H. cited his addiction to fentanyl powder as his drug of choice.

I had a conversation with A.H. utilizing motivational interviewing and other communication methods. After around a half hour of talking with him I provided him instant access to detox and mental health resources. A.H. took advantage of my offer for the Spokane Regional Stabilization Center. I transported him to the stabilization center and provided a warm handoff.

A little more than a month later A.H. sent a text message to my work phone thanking me for taking him to detox that day. He informed me he had been clean and sober for 32 days now.”

Lessons Learned

WASPC continues to hear from its members that the biggest challenge they continue to face when implementing co-responder programs is the ability to hire or maintain employment with qualified mental health professionals or to contract with a community-based service provider for the services of a mental health provider. This is especially apparent in the rural areas of our state. **There are not enough trained and experienced mental health professionals to meet the demands and needs of behavioral health providers in the state.** This will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future.

Additionally, we continue to hear that **infrastructure to meet the needs of MHFR and other similar programs is woefully inadequate.** It remains difficult to connect participants to limited housing, treatment, and other resources.

Recommendations

WASPC continues to recommend that the legislature take action to improve and strengthen the Mental Health Field Response Teams Program.

- Expand the portion of MHFR funds earmarked for Trueblood Phase I and II⁵ to include all applicable regions⁶ as identified by the Department of Social and Health Services.
- Address lack of mental health professionals available to serve community members in crisis.
- Address lack of treatment availability for community members with behavioral health issues.
- Address lack of housing and resources for other basic needs for community members with behavioral health issues.

We look forward to working with the legislature and stakeholders to make necessary modifications and expansions of the program.

Additional Information

Additional information concerning WASPC's Mental Health Field Response Grant Program can be found at <http://www.waspc.org/mental-health-field-response-teams-program>.

⁵ [5187-S.SL.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#) (see sec. 218(5))

⁶ [Trueblood et al v. Washington State DSHS | DSHS](#)