

Mental Health

Expanding Street Outreach and Crisis Response

What: Expanding Street Outreach and Crisis Response (mobile crisis units) in order to provide more direct support to towns, police and emergency departments in their response to individuals experience a mental health or other type of crisis. The goal is to provide supports to individuals, engage them to connect with services and/or get them to the right level of care in a timely manner. Each region is experiencing the needs of high level individuals in a slightly different way and therefore the model may look different in each region. (see below for more detail)

Why: This proven strategy recognizes that intervening earlier leads to better outcomes and more effective use of resources. When people have access to more immediate responses to crisis they are more likely to engage in services. Also having mental health staff on the streets, connecting with police or available more readily to emergency departments, creates a better opportunity to address issues in a more proactive manner resulting in less stress across the system.

Where: In Chittenden, Rutland, Washington and Windham Counties and within the Agency of Human Services/Department of Mental Health in partnership with towns, police departments, hospitals and designated agencies. These regions were initially identified due to the high use of the emergency department, the higher number of the homeless population and use of general assistance. As the planning in these communities evolve we can explore similar needs and responses in other regions.

How: The Agency of Human Services/Department of Mental Health is working in conjunction with the four regions including the towns, hospitals, designated agencies and police departments to identify the best approach in using Street Outreach and Mobile Crisis to address the emergency departments and towns concerns regarding individuals with mental health concerns.

Specifically we are working with the regions on the following:

Chittenden Co: Four street outreach workers will be hired in South Burlington, Colchester, Williston, Winooski, Essex, and Shelburne with shared funding from the towns. Howard Center is in the process of hiring, the positions are advertised, and they hope to have people in the field by the end of January. These positions will be part of the Community Outreach Team and work closely with First Call of Chittenden County.

Washington Co: Currently discussing an additional emergency room screener, peer support in the emergency room and potentially a person to interact with Montpelier and Barre PD for late afternoon calls. The details are still being developed.

Windham Co/Brattleboro: Currently discussing an additional person embedded with Brattleboro Police to work the night shift because they have data that supports that need. Additionally, additional peer support and mobile crisis worker is being considered to help avoid inappropriate admissions to the emergency department. Brattleboro Memorial would like a psychiatric nurse practitioner in their ED. This group will continue to fine-tune what they think will be most helpful to their region.

Rutland: Focusing on a strategy for homeless individuals who also require mental health interventions at times. They are considering the approach of an additional embedded staff with the police.