

Boulder County Sheriff Office Co-Responder Team



For More Information Contact:

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What is the Co-Responder Model?

Working as a co-responder team, law enforcement and a behavioral health specialist respond together to calls for service that may involve mental health, substance use, death of a loved one, or some type of crisis. By drawing upon the combined expertise of the law enforcement official and behavioral health specialist, the team can link people to appropriate services or provide other effective and efficient responses, de-escalating situations that may have resulted in an arrest.

Benefits of Co-Response

Communities have seen many benefits of implementing co-responder models. In cases where the offense related to the crisis is nonviolent, this model often results in a decrease in expensive arrests and jail admissions for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Some communities have seen an associated reduction in psychiatric hospitalizations, although involvement with behavioral health staff may increase the use of psychiatric holds for some individuals, when appropriate. Individuals also gain better and faster access to effective treatment. Bringing trained clinicians to the scene of a crisis allows them to make more accurate needs assessments that can potentially include

collaboration with family and friends (and avoid a costly hospital bill), versus transportation to, and assessment at a facility. Each of these changes has the potential to result in a more cost-effective crisis response continuum and reduce duplication of services.

Co-responder models also have positive, measurable effects on how law enforcement and other first responders handle behavioral health crises, including training to better deescalate intense or emotional crisis situations without the use of force. Individuals in crisis report feeling less threatened and stigmatized in interactions with co-response teams as compared to interactions with law enforcement alone. Many first responders also document more efficient use of time as the co-response teams can take over quickly at crisis scenes, allowing patrol officers to resume their regular duties.

Our Team:

The Co-Responder model used is a secondary response model. Co-Responders receive a page through the active 911 system after law enforcement request the service through dispatch. The Co-Responder drives their own vehicle to the location and comes on scene after law enforcement has rendered it safe. This model is used because of the large physical area in which this team serves. Usually, law enforcement will remain on scene with the Co-Responder or a second Co-Responder can be called to the scene to provide backup. Only when there are two Co-Responders on scene can law enforcement leave.

Referrals to Behavioral Health Services with NowPow

This team is piloting the NowPow referral system. The NowPow system has navigators that obtain and input all Boulder County programs and services into the system. These navigators update this information on a quarterly basis. Co-Responder carry tablets and access this referral system and provide resources and service information as they meet with community members in the field. This information can be sent to the community member via email or text in over 20 different languages. In addition, the Co-Responder Team can use this data system to enter contact notes and capture important information.

Funding:

The Boulder County Sheriff office and Boulder County partnered together and received a 5-year grant through the Office of Behavioral Health to fund this program. We are currently on year two of this grant. In addition to this funding, we also receive some supplemental funds from Boulder County. In the future we are hoping that the partnership between the Sheriff office and Boulder County continues and that together these agencies will obtain long term sustainable funding to maintain this vital program.

How can a Co-Responder help on a call?

All Co-Responders on our team have received extensive training in mental health, substance intoxication and treatment, crisis intervention, verbal de-escalation, crisis case management, tactical empathy, and the assessment of suicidal lethality.

In addition, when Co-responders respond to a call, they will have various items in their vehicles that **they can give to community members who are in crisis**. This includes socks, hats, gloves, water, granola bars, stuffed animals, phones with pre-paid minutes, first aid supplies, car emergency gear, extra PPE, tarps, emergency blankets, wipes, dog leashes, hygiene kits etc.

Ongoing Case Management

In addition, we have **Specialty Case Management staff** that will provide ongoing services to a community member for as long as needed. Law Enforcement can make a referral directly (anytime).

Coverage Areas: Lafayette, Erie and anywhere the Sheriff Department goes (including mountains), Nederland and Ward.

Time of Coverage: 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm (7 days a week)

Staffing Pattern: 2-3 Co-Responders on every shift excluding weekends. On the weekends there will be 1-2 Co-Responders on shift.

Data / Outcomes:

This team began providing services on **Dec. 7, 2020** after a previous contract with Mental Health Partners expired.

Total Referrals / Request for Services from 12/07/2020 – 01/27/2021

Location	Calls for Service	CM Referrals
Sheriff Department	9	11
Lafayette	7	19
Erie	10	10
Ward	0	1
Nederland	1	0
Lyons	1	0
Total	28	41

Reasons for Referral to Co-Responder Program (Calls & Case Management) from 12/07/2020 – 01/27/2021

Reason	Sheriff	Lafayette	Erie	Ward Nederland Lyons	Total
Adult - Addiction	2	3	1	0	6
Adolescent- Addiction	1	1	0	0	2
Adult Suicide	2	1	1	1	5
Adolescent Suicide	5	3	2	1	11
Autism Spectrum Disorder - Adolescent	1	0	1	0	2
Developmental Disability	0	0	1	0	1
Domestic Disturbance	0	3	2	1	6
Geriatric	0	1	0	0	1
Homeless	2	0	0	0	2
M1 Hold	2	0	1	0	3
Medical	0	4	0	0	4
Mental Illness	5	4	4	0	13
Parenting	0	7	1	1	9