



Improving Crisis Response for Individuals with Mental Health Challenges: West Side Community Outreach Pilot

Background:

The impact of stigma and untreated mental illness and addiction are painfully visible in the City of Chicago. Lack of understanding about how to recognize and address behavioral health issues, damaged trust between first responders and the communities they serve and need for improved capacity and processes to effectively interact with individuals with mental illness are issues that will take a comprehensive, coordinated approach to resolving. Over the past year, much progress has been made. Improved and expanded training for first responders, better data systems and tracking, improved management – all of these have been advanced by the Citywide Mental Health Crisis Response Steering Committee¹. Still, critical components of effective crisis response include adequate treatment options, and public understanding of the signs and symptoms of mental illness and what to do in times of crises. Often, stigma is a barrier to appropriate action.

To improve public understanding and reduce stigma, the West Side Outreach Project is a community-based pilot initiative to provide free training to trusted mentors in the Austin, North Lawndale, and East/West Garfield Park communities (Police Districts 10, 11, and 15). Outreach will focus on school staff, faith leaders and those who work in community based organizations (CBOs) with the goal of training 400 or more people in the next six months. Trainings will be delivered by mental health experts and providers, including NAMI Chicago, Presence Health, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Sinai Health System, Thresholds and Trilogy Behavioral Healthcare, and will include tailored versions for specific audiences. The project is funded by the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Michael Reese Health Trust.

The West Side Outreach Project Goals:

1. Increase mental health literacy (knowledge of signs and symptoms of mental illness).
2. Reduce stigmatizing attitudes/beliefs about mental illness.
3. Increase requests for/deployments of CIT trained officers in crisis situations.
4. Increase referrals to professional mental health services.

How we plan to do this:

- **Provide free mental health training** to trusted mentors in Austin, North Lawndale, and East/West Garfield Park communities (Police Districts 10, 11, and 15). Special outreach will be made to reach school staff, faith leaders and those who work in community based organizations.
- **Collaborate with stakeholders** on the west side to identify individuals and organizations who wish to participate in free training and disseminate information.

¹ Mayor's Office, Chicago Police Department, Office of Emergency Management and Communications, Chicago Fire Department, Department of Public Health, The Kennedy Forum, NAMI-Chicago, Thresholds, The University of Illinois at Chicago, Presence Health, Sinai Health System.

The Citywide Mental Health Crisis Response Steering Committee is working to advance recommendations by The Kennedy Forum, NAMI-Chicago, and partners and by the Police Accountability Task Force as they relate to addressing crisis response for residents with mental health and addiction challenges. The group includes focused efforts around better data collection, police training, community engagement and connection to appropriate care.

- **Evaluate the trainings.** UIC's Jane Addams College of Social Work is spearheading an evaluation of the effectiveness of this training and information dissemination, with an eye toward expanding its reach to all of Chicago's communities. The study is jointly by the Michael Reese Health Trust and the Chicago Department of Public Health.

How you can help:

- **Disseminate information.** Download fact sheets, resource cards, template letters and e-blasts, and tailored outreach materials for various groups at www.TheKennedyForumIllinois.org/free-mental-health-awareness-training/. Request hard copies by calling 312-479-2636. Help us get the word out about available trainings.
- **Request a training** for your organization's staff and leadership. CBOs, schools and houses of faith in Austin, North Lawndale, and East/West Garfield Park communities are especially encouraged to participate. You can call 312-563-0445 or complete a request form here <http://cepurl.com/b8Mobb>

West Side Outreach Community Partners:

Advocate Health Care, Alderman Burnett, Alderman Ervin, Alderman Mitts, Alderman Scott, Alderman Taliaferro, Anixter Center, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago: Center for Childhood Resilience, BBF Family Services, Bethany Fund, Blue Cross Blue Shield Illinois, Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive Behavioral Health Center, Catholic Charities, Chicago Area Project, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, The Chicago Urban League, Commissioner Robert Steele, Cook County Health and Hospitals System, Gateway Foundation, Hartgrove Behavioral Health, Health and Disability Advocates, I Am Able, Interfaith Mental Health Coalition, The Kennedy Forum Illinois, Loretto Hospital, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, MADDO Healthcare, Marshall High School, Michael Reese Health Trust, NAMI Chicago, Next Level Health, Presence Health, Primo Center, St. Anthony's Hospital, Sandy Hook Promise, Sinai Health System, Thresholds, Trilogy Behavioral Healthcare, Westside Health Authority, and University of Illinois-Chicago.

Facts:

- Illinois consumers access community services 50% less than the national average.
- Behavioral health problems such as substance use, violence, risky driving, mental health problems, and risky sexual activity are now the leading causes of death for those aged 15 to 24.
- Nearly 50% of adults in Illinois who suffer from a severe mental illness don't receive treatment²
- Across the country, approximately 10% of encounters with police involve someone who suffers with a mental illness³ and 20% of all jail and prison inmates suffer with a mental illness⁴

Progress

- In 2016, all Chicago 911 dispatchers were trained in a mental health awareness course. The training is now required for all new dispatchers, and will continue as an education component of daily roll calls.
- In 2016 dispatcher identification of emergency calls involving a mental health component increased dramatically, with 7 times as many CIT officers dispatched to respond from the previous year.
- In 2016, almost 500 new Chicago police officers were trained in 40-hour CIT certification courses, including collaborative training from officers within the Crisis Response Unit and mental health experts at NAMI-Chicago.

For more information contact James Burns with The Kennedy Forum at 312-479-2636.

² <http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/smi-prevalence-chart.pdf>

³ <http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/overlooked-in-the-undercounted.pdf>

⁴ Id.