

Improving Crisis Response for Individuals with
Mental Health Challenges:

West Side Community Outreach Pilot Project Evaluation

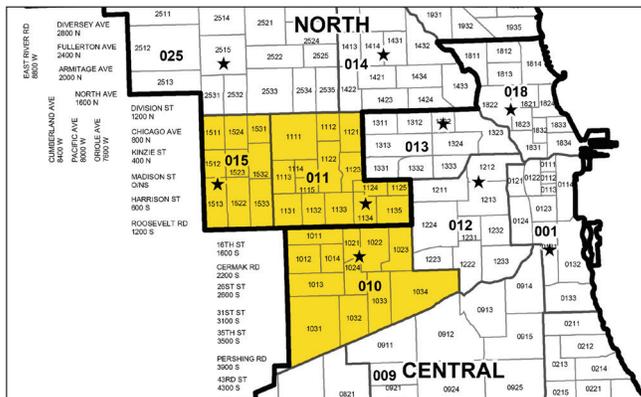
Fact Sheet

Evaluators

- University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work.
- Led by Dr. Amy C. Watson and Dr. Lorrie Rickman-Jones and their team, Emily Janvier, Ioana Qureshi, Emily Keating and Andrew Repp.

About

- A community-based initiative that provided free mental health training to 583 community members living and/or working in the Austin, North Lawndale, and East/West Garfield Park communities (*Police Districts 10, 11, and 15*).



The West Side Outreach Pilot Project is a community-based initiative to provide free training to community members in the Austin, North Lawndale, and East/West Garfield Park communities (Police Districts 10, 11, and 15).

- Funded by The Chicago Department of Public Health, through a grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCAST) program. The Michael Reese Health Trust supported the project evaluation.
- Increase mental health literacy (knowledge of signs and symptoms of mental illness).
- Reduce stigmatizing attitudes/beliefs about mental illness.
- Increase requests for CIT trained officers in crisis situations.
- Increase referrals to professional mental health services.

Need

- Many individuals experiencing mental health difficulties and distress do not access effective mental health services due to lack of mental health literacy (recognizing signs and symptoms and knowing where to seek help) and stigma.
- Police are often the first line of response to individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Even officers who have received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training are not always directed to emergencies where their skills are needed. For example, this can happen when 911 calls are not correctly identified as mental health-related.
- Often emergency communications personnel do not have the information necessary to connect a CIT officer to a mental health crisis.

Approach

- A community advisory group met monthly for one year to provide strategic guidance, members also helped to conduct outreach and host trainings.
- Outreach focused on school staff, faith leaders, and community based organization employees (CBOs). These groups were selected due to their position within the community as trusted messengers, their presumed higher likelihood of coming into contact with someone experiencing mental health distress, and their ability to intervene before the situation becomes a crisis.
- Two types of training were provided: Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health Awareness. Mental Health Awareness is a 2-2 and a half hour training that focuses on identifying the signs and symptoms of a mental health issue and how to communicate with someone experiencing a crisis. Mental Health First Aid™ is an eight-hour training that addresses signs and symptoms of a mental health issue and how to react to help someone in a time of crisis.
- All instructors were trained by NAMI Chicago on how to access a CIT trained officer. This allowed all trainers to teach their curricula about mental health and substance use as well as provide information about how to access a CIT officer.
- All participants received a resource card with information about how to access services and how to access a CIT trained officer.

Evaluation Results

- Final results from 24 separate trainings: 14 mental health awareness trainings and 10 mental health first aid trainings.
- The results show that partnering with communities and providing brief mental health trainings:



Decreased the stigma associated with mental health and addiction



Increased knowledge and comfort in contacting a CIT trained police officer



Increased confidence that requesting a CIT trained officer will result in better outcomes

Recommendations & Next Steps

- Expand the model to additional communities across Chicago, prioritizing those with the greatest need and where infrastructure and capacity already exists.
- With continued support from the Chicago Department of Public Health and Chicago Community Trust, the project will launch in the Greater Roseland community on June 25, 2018.

Contact

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