



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Committee - CoResponse Models

Roll Call: Gerlach, Hendricks, Zucal

1. Michael Trail (program overview, lessons learned, rationale, planning, evaluation, costs) 15min
2. Christopher T. Dohey (program overview, lessons learned, rationale, planning, evaluation, costs) 15 min
3. Pinebrook (comments on two presentations, case worker experiences similar to co-response, areas for growth, evaluation tools) 15min
4. Discussion/Q&A

1. Michael Trail (program overview, lessons learned, rationale, planning, evaluation, costs)

Chief of Police, Lansdale Borough, 21,000; noted his community is a dense, urban like area. Saw spike in opioid overdoses and mental health calls during Covid, intent was to focus on issues like this in 2020 - police couldn't deal with mental health issues and connect folks with appropriate services. They have a HUB program - multi-disciplined team look at cases in a monthly meeting, review 'cases' to make referrals. Main goals - wanted to reduce use of force and to de-escalate situations; and reduce amount of police time on calls and repeat calls relating to mental health issues. Got a grant to develop a program - contractual program with Meraky- billed at per hour rate. Have a set of policies relating to the program. Coming up on one year anniversary with program. Program won support and buy in of officers; once a relationship is established with a 'client' - start with co-response initiate; responder then may take calls herself to deal with needs. Noted Salt Lake City has a good model; but the Philadelphia program was the basis of their model. Programs need to grow organically from stakeholders; don't script heavily because there will be setbacks and failures - suggested incremental development. Looking at hiring two employees in 2026 rather than having a contract with an agency because the program has been successful - will get coverage on weekends. Sees this as a model for police departments going forward.

Alexis Moyer, co-responder in Lansdale, was on the call, works for Behavioral Health Agency - had 20 years' experience, had relationships with folks before this operation - noted relationships and gaining trust is important. Police do email referrals. Requires multiple visits to establish relationships with clients to gain trust; have had success stories getting folks into drug rehab and linked to social case workers for follow-ups. Focus on safety, said she has a sense of her situation and safety, wears bullet proof vest.

Q and A: 30 sworn officers; all officers have basic CIT training, some have advanced CIT training, program needs to develop organically with stakeholders to develop trust. Noted a lot of the calls they get have a mental health and substance abuse nexus, police recognize need for follow-up. County dispatches, county doesn't allow CR to have a police radio, addressing this issue. Montgomery County also has a CIS - they have one ambulance and a few workers - long response time because of limited resources, overwhelmed.

2. Christopher T. Dohey, Co-responder Bucks County Program (program overview, lessons learned, rationale, planning, evaluation, costs)

Bucks County has a co-responder program, 911 call can be directed to a co-responder. Focus on crisis intervention, mental health, and substance abuse referrals. Program developed in early 2020 to deal with needs in the community; coresponders are county employees - county pays salary for two years, after which the police depts pick up the salaries based on their approval, multiple police depts have bought in. Reduce the call volume and repeat calls of departments. CR have radios and cars; go out on own calls but do not ride with police. Most responses are referrals - police note mental health/substance abuse/children/youth issues. Officers bought in to program over-time. Chris works with 9 police departments that all support the program. Police Chiefs are part of entire process from hiring, interview and deployment. Dr. Griffith (?) - Kutztown U., has been evaluating program from the data that is collected - results have been successful based on program data and police surveys, have won awards based on program. Note 24% of calls were frequent flyers - reduced to 2% with cr responses.

3. Pinebrook (comments on two presentations, case worker

experiences similar to co-response, areas for growth, evaluation tools)

Pinebrook Reps: Program was piloted through Allentown PD as a result of a grant to the county; don't have an official HUB program but they work with providers of services and stakeholders. Noted takes time to get clients referred to services. Have Familiar Faces (repeated callers) that become a focus. Can bring folks into Lehigh County Mental Health Court. Working within the corrections system. Have 2 specialist working within Allentown, 800 referrals since last July; limited contact with 2 case workers. Referred to a recent Conference noting the consensus was social workers should not go out on their own, need police presence. Police not entirely CI trained. Based on participation in a conference, suggested we are ahead of the game but have limited resources. Trust is the major factor in getting referrals into the system. Recommended 5-7 more people needed. Get referrals through police officers. Act as advocate for person in many cases - services, court system, etc. Officers support program and intervention of caseworker, creating trusts can result in client calling cr directly rather than Police or 911.

Q and A: Suggested city is doing it, just underfunded and not codified or in place in a systematic way. Point of educating ourselves with this, is to help us grow it organically within our context. Program needs to be tailored to the city and have backing of all the stakeholders and interests. Noted the County also has three CISs.

Last note by Trail was even though there is a costs to the program and governments lack resources; this is an investment that will help the community, free up police time and get folks services they need.

ADJOURNED: 6:06 PM