

# **New Bedford police and Child & Family Services partner on co-response program**

The following is a press release from the New Bedford Police Department:

The New Bedford Police Department and Child & Family Services, Inc. Emergency Services Program (ESP) have partnered and are now providing a Co-Response Program. Chief Cordeiro recognized the need for improving the availability of behavioral health services in our community. Chief Cordeiro along with Pam Bolarinho, LICSW ESP Director with the support of the 24-hour program Site Director Wendy Botelho, LMHC have joined together and are piloting a Co-Response Program to service the New Bedford Area.

The program is currently active in several other communities in Massachusetts which include the Boston and Cape Cod areas. The New Bedford Police Department, along with the Emergency Services Program, has extended this great work to the New Bedford community. Through this Co-Response Program, an Emergency Services Clinician along with NBPD Officers are responding to individuals who are suffering or experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.

The goal of the Co-Response Program is to provide real-time access to a trained behavioral health clinician. The clinician will provide a community-based intervention with the intent to stabilize non-violent individuals, provide linkages to support systems, reduce the need for these individuals to go to local emergency departments, and decreasing arrests of individuals experiencing psychiatric or behavioral health emergencies. This program will also decrease the amount of time officers are tied up with behavioral health calls and allow officers to

tend to calls for service.

Within the first two weeks of the program's inception, it has already serviced 16 individuals in the community. This collaborative response has allowed greater availability and access to a behavioral health clinician and a reduction in individuals going to the emergency department for behavioral health care needs. St. Luke's Emergency Physicians and Nurses have expressed that when a patient is brought into the emergency room by the co-responder clinician and officer that the handoff has been positive and effective in streamlining the process.

The partnership is hopeful that this program will benefit individuals in our community who are suffering from a crisis or mental health issues and provide them with the resources that they need in order to be successful in the community.

The Co-Response Program has begun in the North End part of New Bedford where the Chief has noted the highest volume of behavioral health calls. The program will begin with one designated clinician Jake Hasson along with North End station officers with the goal of extending to all areas of New Bedford in the future.