



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2010 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- ☒ Community Health and Safety
- ☐ Community Partnership
- ☐ Community Sustainability
- ☐ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Mental Health Detail

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City Of San Antonio

Jurisdiction population(s): 1.3 million

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: December Year: 2008

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Sheryl Sculley

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of San Antonio

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator / Primary Contact

Name of contact: Catherine Hernandez

Title: Interim Executive Jurisdiction: City of San Antonio
Assistant to the City
Manager

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CITY OF SAN ANTONIO – 2010 ICMA AWARD ENTRY:

PROGRAM EXCELLENCE AWARD/COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD

DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE: MENTAL HEALTH DETAIL

The San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) Mental Health Detail began operations on December 1, 2008, and currently functions as a detail of the SAPD Central Service Area-SAFFE Unit. The SAPD Mental Health Detail was a direct result of the City of San Antonio's cooperative effort and partnership with the Bexar County Justice Center, Bexar County Sheriff's Office and the Center for Health Care Services (Bexar County's Local Mental Health Authority).

Problem Assessment:

The collaborative intent was to improve public safety through an enhanced commitment and response to those individuals experiencing mental crisis, a population poorly served in the past. Often times, persons in crisis were improperly incarcerated for offenses as an 'easy fix' to the situation presented. Jails were filled with those individuals whose actions met the requisites for a particular offense, without regard to their mental condition. As a result, the person failed to receive the necessary treatment to prevent repeated behavior in the future, leading to more arrests and continued expense in handling them. Additionally, it was found that many of these same consumers were not only occupying police department resources, but were also the subject of calls for service by EMS paramedics.

Program Implementation and Costs:

As early as 2003, Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) within the San Antonio Police Department began with the goals of recognizing consumers experiencing mental crisis and channeling them into treatment rather than emergency rooms and jail cells. The goals of the detail are to provide on-site mental health services to include conducting preliminary and follow-up investigations involving mental health assessments, emergency detentions, attempted

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suicides, and other mental health related issues. The detail is also tasked with identifying and screening those individuals who are high utilizers of the 911 Emergency System. They are connected with other community support services to alleviate unnecessary utilization of police and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) resources, thereby improving response to true emergencies.

Officers Ernest Stevens and William Kasberg are the police officers assigned to the Mental Health Detail and are housed at the Center for Health Care Services. Currently the associated costs with this detail are the salary and benefits for Officer Stevens and Kasberg. This cost is \$201,825.

The Center, Bexar County's 24/7 public psychiatric screening facility, that the officers use screens approximately 500 persons per month. The officers, along with mental health assessors, utilize a team approach to screening consumers. The officers are Certified Mental Health Officers and state certified law enforcement instructors. They have played a vital role in the development, planning and operation of a 40 hour mental health course for local law enforcement personnel and have implemented the nation's first Children's Crisis Intervention 40 hour training program. Through their efforts and training, over 700 peace officers in the local service area have been trained in Crisis Intervention Training. Officers have come from 40 different municipalities, including 911 Dispatchers, Fire and EMS departments throughout Texas to learn the concepts of Crisis Intervention and how to effectively deal with those individuals in mental crisis.

Since the inception of the program, Officers Stevens and Kasberg have responded to referrals from various sources, including area schools, hospitals, the Center for Health Care Services Clinic and Crisis Line. Most requests for assistance have come from other officers,

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who encountered individuals in crisis while on patrol or responding to dispatched calls for service. At this point the Mental Health Detail makes its biggest impact by assuming control of the situation and relieving those officers in the field of the call responsibility. Through their specialized response and skills of personal interaction and communication, the detail is able to free up officers to continue the law enforcement mission while arranging an acceptable resolution for the mental health consumer.

Measurable Outcomes:

In 2009, the Mental Health Detail received 374 referrals from SAPD officers dealing with subjects who were mentally ill and in crisis. Through their assumption of call responsibility, the Mental Health officers relieved a total of 1081 officers, who were able to return back to their patrol duties. Also, the Mental Health officers only found it necessary to arrest six of these individuals and were able to secure proper treatment for 229 through the use of Emergency Detention. Other cases were either resolved on the scene or linked to proper care through family or community services, thus exemplifying the SAPD support of the Bexar County Jail Diversion Program.

The Mental Health Detail has received numerous letters of appreciation and support from affected family members and throughout the community. Former San Antonio Mayor Phil Hardberger authored a letter of appreciation for Officers Stevens and Kasberg citing their intervention in an extremely volatile, crisis situation in which a consumer, a military veteran suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), was threatening suicide with a rifle in his possession. Through the use of their specialized training and active listening skills the officers developed a rapport and coaxed the individual out of his barricaded position. With the barrel of the rifle still in his mouth, the consumer listened as the officers patiently offered effective verbal

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reflections and persistent persuasion to remedy the situation. The officers talked the consumer into releasing the weapon and walking out on his own, where EMS provided immediate assistance and rushed him to the hospital for treatment of a drug overdose.

The tangible results over the course of implementation and in collaboration with community stakeholders are:

1. Bexar County Adult Detention Center experienced the best two months ever, 90% occupancy as of February 17, 2010 @ 7:00 a.m. Jail population is the lowest it has been in 3 years.
2. Coordinated efforts with the local mental health agency have reduced costs of diversion for persons with mental illness detained by SAPD from \$2,295 to \$350 per booking event.
3. Savings and deferred costs to both the City of San Antonio and Bexar County have been documented to total \$6.2 million for FY 2009.

Recently, San Antonio has also been selected as the sight of the first International Crisis Intervention Training Conference to be held the first week of June, 2010. The conference will play host to an estimated 2000 CIT officers from around the world. The Conference agenda has been a direct result of the curriculum begun by the Mental Health Detail and their Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program.

Lessons Learned:

In summary, the addition of the Mental Health Detail has resulted in collaborative efforts which have yielded significant outcomes for law enforcement and the community at large. By combining the efforts of crisis intervention training, the Mental Health Detail, and various programs of the Center for Health Care Services, and collaborating with an array of community stakeholders, this community experienced the following results:

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- Greater efficiency in the use of law enforcement resulting in increased public safety and return of law enforcement officers back to community policing
- Reduced inappropriate incarceration of persons with mental illness and substance abuse
- Reduced inappropriate use of emergency rooms and hospitalizations
- Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public dollars
- Reduced victimization and increased support for our homeless population