

AT YOUR SERVICE: CHM LIAISONS HELP SUPPORT OFFICERS AND THE COURTS

By Christine Patterson, Ph.D.



Mark Wardlow - BJC Behavioral Health (St. Francois, Iron and Washington Counties); Kim Panicky - ALM Hopewell Center (St. Louis City); Jamie Bartin - Crider Health Center (St. Charles, Lincoln, Warren and Franklin Counties); Danielle Conrey - BJC Behavioral Health (St. Louis Co.); Chris Beavin - BJC Behavioral Health (St. Louis City). Not shown: Tia Coleman - BHR (Eastern Region Coordinator); Kristy Dale - COMTREA (Jefferson Co.)

The new Community Mental Health Liaison (CHML) program is part of Governor Nixon's new Strengthening Mental Health Initiative. Thirty CMHLs were hired across the state in late 2013 (eight in the St. Louis region) to assist law enforcement and courts.

The goal is to form better partnerships between Community Mental Health Centers, law enforcement and courts to **save valuable resources**. The program will reduce unnecessary jail, prison and hospital stays and **improve outcomes** for individuals with behavioral health issues.

Although CMHLs have been meeting with many police departments in their service area, here is some basic information so you know how they can assist you when you intervene with people in a psychiatric crisis.

Q: Do CMHLs replace the current 24/7/365 crisis services provided by Behavioral Health Response (BHR) in the eastern region?

A: No. In the eastern region of Missouri, CMHLs and BHR coordinate together and will respond 24/7/365. With law enforcement referrals, the CHML will follow up for a minimum of 30 days to help improve the linkage between hospitals, inpatient and out-patient treatment.

Police departments outside the eastern region of Missouri can connect with their CMHL in two ways.

- Contact your Access Crisis Intervention hotline 24/7/365. If you don't know the number, use the map and contact info dmh.mo.gov/mentalillness/progs/acimap.htm.
- Contact me at 573-634-4626 or cpatterson@mocmhc.org.

Q: Who should make a referral to a CMHL?

A: Any law enforcement or court personnel.

Q: How does law enforcement make a referral to a CMHL?

A: In the eastern region, call BHR at **1-800-811-4760**; they will contact the CMHL serving your county. In other areas of the state, contact the Access Crisis Intervention hotline mentioned above.

Q: Who should be referred?

A: Any person with mental health or substance abuse issues who repeatedly comes into contact with law enforcement.

Q: Can referrals be made after law enforcement leaves the scene?

A: Yes. Call if you want a CMHL to follow up with an individual.

Q: What other services do the CMHLs provide?

A: Call with any questions you have about mental health or substance abuse issues, treatment, services available, etc. Call if you are interested in POST-approved mental health training designed for law enforcement.

Q: Can a CMHL drive someone to the hospital?

A: No, because of potential safety risks. We ask that law enforcement or EMS transport. CMHLs can assist with coordinating treatment once at the hospital.

Q: Will CMHLs be able to solve all mental health or substance abuse issues?

A: No. The creation of the CMHL position is a good first step, but there are no new beds or additional services. What the CMHLs **can do** is follow up with people referred to them to improve access to beds and services that are available. Ultimately, the services available for people with mental health issues and substance abuse problems need to be expanded.

Christine Patterson, PhD, works for the Coalition of Community Mental Health Centers, a membership agency of Community Mental Health Centers and Substance Abuse providers across Missouri. Christine is the state-wide coordinator of the Community Mental Health Liaison Initiative. For questions or comments, contact her at 573-634-4626 or cpatterson@mocmhc.org.