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## Improving Crisis Response

*Federal grant to fund police-mental health collaboration between Integrated Services of Kalamazoo and all law enforcement agencies in Kalamazoo County*

*Kalamazoo, Mich.* – The U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance has awarded [Integrated Services of Kalamazoo](#) (ISK) a \$550,000 grant under its “Connect and Protect: Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Responses” program. The grant will fund the creation of a Police-Mental Health Collaboration (PMHC) to improve public safety responses and outcomes for individuals with mental illness (MI) or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse (CMISA) who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

ISK’s partners on the project include the [Kalamazoo County Sheriff’s Office](#), police/public safety from the cities of Kalamazoo, Portage, Vicksburg, Richland, Augusta, Schoolcraft and Kalamazoo Township, as well as Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch.

Recognizing that law enforcement has become a primary source of contact for individuals experiencing psychiatric and/or substance use crises, the PMHC will develop a consistent, cross-system crisis response model that includes mental health expertise and defines clear procedures for all responders: dispatch, ISK and law enforcement agencies. As co-responders with public safety officers, emergency mental health staff will provide triage and de-escalation for individuals in a mental health crisis and facilitate access to emergency and follow-up services from the mental health system, according to ISK CEO Jeff Patton.

“Law enforcement encounters with individuals with mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorder is a growing concern in Kalamazoo County, as indicated by 911 call volume reports,” Patton said. Based on ISK data, 21.2% (1,561) of individuals served by ISK (7,349) had criminal justice involvement in FY 19-20. “Many people referred to mental health services through law enforcement don’t engage effectively in needed treatment and receive fewer services than those without criminal justice involvement,” Patton added.

Public safety leaders involved in the project endorse the PMHC model as a way to close these gaps. “It will expand our ability to respond to calls for service when a person is likely having a mental health emergency,” says Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard Fuller. “Sometimes reported criminal activity involves someone having a mental health emergency. While we have a high level of trained law enforcement responders in Kalamazoo, the need exists for highly trained and experienced mental health workers responding with law enforcement.”

Project funding will also go toward further development of a 24/7 crisis-response drop-off center for individuals with mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders, aligned with national guidelines for behavioral health crisis care and safe policing. The center, to be staffed by ISK emergency mental health clinicians, will provide law enforcement with an alternative drop-off site instead of the emergency department or jail, when clinically appropriate. It will also facilitate individuals’ speedy connection to resources and services.

The PMHC will complement several existing partnership activities between ISK and public safety officers:

- Officers currently make referrals to ISK’s Opioid Overdose Response Program for substance use calls, and an ISK peer recovery coach accompanies officers for follow-ups with individuals who’ve recently experienced a substance use crisis.
- ISK has a dedicated phone number for law enforcement to connect directly with an on-call mental health clinician for consultation.
- ISK staff join officers on shift “ride-alongs,” and occasionally join in law enforcement responses.
- The Kalamazoo County Sheriff’s Department collaborates with ISK on jail diversion programs and supports ISK clinicians in providing services to individuals in the county jail.

ISK sought priority consideration for the grant based on high poverty rates in the areas of concern. The PMHC project focuses on six contiguous, densely populated, high-poverty census tracts with some of the highest risk factors related to contacts between law enforcement and individuals with a mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorder.

These locations have high 911 call volumes related to mental illness/substance use: 198.2 calls per 1,000 people, compared to 56.6 per 1,000 in the county overall. The combined census tracts have a poverty rate of 30.7% versus 13.3% in the county overall and a crime index of 264 versus 112 in the county overall. The tracts are home to 21% of the people ISK serves.

Lindsey O'Neil will serve as coordinator of the PMHC. O'Neil is Supervisor of Jail Diversion Services and Co-Project Director of the 8th District Mental Health Recovery Court. With extensive experience as an emergency mental health and jail clinician, O'Neill is a mental health consultant for the Kalamazoo County Crisis Negotiation SWAT team and a member of the Community Corrections Advisory Board.

O'Neil and the PMHC will work with Kalamazoo County's Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT) group, an initiative of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, to build community relationships and provide information on the collaboration's initiatives.

#### **About Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK)**

Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (formerly known as Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services) provides a welcoming and diverse community partnership to share effective resources that support individuals and families to be successful through all phases of life. For more than 30 years, ISK has served youth, families and adults with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities and substance use disorders in Kalamazoo County. ISK serves nearly 8,000 individuals annually, either directly through ISK service programs or through a network of provider agencies that contract with ISK. The agency is one of 46 Community Mental Health Services Programs in Michigan. More information is available at [www.iskzoo.org](http://www.iskzoo.org) or by calling 269-373-6000. ISK is on Facebook at [facebook.com/KazooCMH](https://facebook.com/KazooCMH).

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