



State of New York County of Broome Government Offices

Office of Emergency Services

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New Mental Health Effort Underway in Broome County *Program is a First of Its Kind in New York State*

(BINGHAMTON, NY) In collaboration with the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier, CPEP/UHS and other organizations, The Broome County Office of Emergency Services has launched a new Mental Health Diversion program.

To our knowledge, this program is a first of its kind in New York State and started in early December. It was implemented to provide people having an emotional crisis with better service.

Calls for mental health assistance to the Broome County 911 center have increased greatly throughout the years. Up until now, those calls automatically received the response of law enforcement to the caller's location. Depending on the situation, EMS may have also be dispatched. Those calls for service typically end in transport to the hospital in a police car, or an ambulance. In fact, out of just under two-thousand mental health calls for service in Broome County in a twelve-month period, seventy-percent of those ended at the hospital, and many of those were released after de-escalating. This not only ties up emergency services and backs up the hospital's emergency room, but in many cases, is also followed by a costly bill to Medicaid.

However, sometimes a person in an emotional crisis might call 911 and not always require the response of law enforcement. In some cases, the individuals just need someone to help talk them through a crisis, help de-escalate the situation, empower them, and develop a safety plan for the person.

Under this new program, instead of sending Law Enforcement and Emergency Medical Services resources to every caller in an emotional crisis - the caller, **if they meet certain criteria**, is offered a transfer to a trained mental health professional at UHS's CPEP: Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program. Those patients receive the needed services by phone. CPEP is a 24-hour crisis service and is staffed by psychiatric nurses, social workers and paraprofessionals under the direction of a medical director/psychiatrist.

This new diversion initiative keeps first responders available for other emergencies. In addition, there is an anticipated cost savings for each Medicaid patient who does not require an Emergency Room and CPEP visit.

Those individuals in an emotional crisis that are determined to need a Law Enforcement and EMS response will continue to receive that response.

This initiative involves many partners including Broome County Office of Emergency Services, CPEP/UHS, The Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier (MHA ST), Broome County

Mental Health, Care Compass Network, New York State Office of Mental Health, and The Institute for Police, Mental Health & Community Collaboration.

MIKE HATCH, Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator with The Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier said: “It’s an honor to continue to be part of an amazing group of professionals and organizations who truly strive to provide the best quality of care for persons with mental illness. This emotionally distressed call diversion program is a great example of agencies collaborating and recognizing, that in many cases, they are all serving the same population and they could do it in a more cost effective way that not only frees up emergency services, but hospital emergency rooms as well. This program would not have been possible without the funding provided by Care Compass Network. Care Compass Network recognized this program among the many others they champion as a new community focused model to provide a higher quality of care and more cost-effective service to Medicaid members.” The provided funding supported mental health awareness, risk assessment, and crisis de-escalation training to every 911 dispatcher in Broome County.

ALAN WILMARTH, CPEP/UHS said: “Crisis management is what we specialize in and have been providing to our community since 1995 whether it is via our own crisis line, mobile crisis services, or services within BGH ED. UHS CPEP's involvement in the 911 Diversion project will strengthen our community crisis efforts and ensure that the caller is managed outside the emergency department setting while still receiving community Behavioral Health connection services.”

MIKE PONTICIELLO, Director of Emergency Services for Broome County said: “In Emergency Services, we always try to meet the needs of someone who may not be having the best day. To do that we must use all the tools at our disposal and not just the traditional Police, Fire or EMS responders. With this new collaboration, we have added a new tool to the toolbox and can provide a better service to the residents of Broome County.”