

# Missoula CARES Program

## Fact Sheet

### **Overview**

The Missoula Fire Department and Partnership Health Center (PHC) formed a partnership in September aimed at diverting people with low-acuity behavioral health issues from jail and hospital emergency departments. They named the pilot program Missoula Collaborating for Access to Resources and Emotional Support, CARES for short. It is funded by grants from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, including a County and Tribal Matching Grant, along with funding support from the City of Missoula and Missoula County.

Beginning Monday, Nov. 16, at 10 a.m., CARES will operate two new Fire Department units, called Mobile Support Teams (MST) to assist our emergency responders and community members. Each unit will consist of one Fire Department emergency medical technician (EMT) and one Partnership Health Center licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). These units will be supported by one PHC case facilitator who will support each unit, following up with individuals to connect them with services in our community

### **Goals**

The goal of this program is to provide the right care in the right setting to people experiencing behavioral health emergencies. The program aims to decrease arrests and emergency room visits by stabilizing people experiencing behavioral health crises in the least restrictive settings and connecting them to the services they need. The program also looks to reduce the time and resources Missoula first responders spend addressing situations where behavioral health is a chief concern. PHC and the Fire Department will track outcome and process measures, evaluate the program's impact and document gaps in the continuum of mental health care in the Missoula community. The Fire Department and Partnership will also track additional metrics to see what other impacts this program has on workloads across the involved agencies.



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## Fact Sheet (continued)

### **Process**

The Mobile Support Teams will not self-dispatch to behavioral or mental health calls. Rather, 911 Dispatch Center staff will assign them to behavioral health calls as an additional unit with the normal complement of emergency responders during their hours of operation. The teams will work from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. five days a week to start and later expand services to seven days a week. Upon arrival on a scene, the responding agency (Fire, ambulance or law enforcement) will collaborate with the Support Team personnel to determine if an individual is an appropriate candidate for behavioral health stabilization. If so, Support Team members will release the other agencies and assess the most appropriate resource for the individual. Additionally, Fire, law enforcement or ambulance service may respond to an incident and find upon arrival that it is not a medical or law enforcement incident but a behavioral health issue. In those cases, the on-scene personnel may request the Support Team staff to respond and intervene with the person.

The PHC case facilitator will assist with follow-up, referrals and a transition to the appropriate level of mental health care. The case facilitator will also arrange follow-up on cases that are forwarded to CARES outside of Support Team duty hours or if multiple requests occur simultaneously during duty hours.

### **Contacts**

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