

# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

## **A New Approach to Mental Health Crisis Calls: Mental Health Professionals Partner with Police** *Clinicians pair with law enforcement in county's four largest cities*

**Redwood City** — Mental health professionals will team with law enforcement in San Mateo County's four largest cities as part of a pilot program aimed at de-escalating 9-1-1 calls and providing appropriate, compassionate care for non-violent individuals.

The pilot program launches Monday, December 6, 2021, in Daly City, San Mateo, Redwood City and South San Francisco. It's set in motion with twin goals: provide an alternative to jail and overburdened hospital emergency rooms for non-violent individuals undergoing a behavioral health crisis and free up police officers.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors along with participating cities provide funding for what's called the Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project.

"This program is intended to give law enforcement a resource by teaming a police officer with a mental health clinician that can help manage high-risk situations in a way that improves outcomes and public safety," said Supervisor Don Horsley.

County Manager Mike Callagy echoed the sentiment.

"The County is proud to support such an important and necessary intervention which supports the safety of the individual in crisis and those around them," Callagy said. "This provides another option for those who need mental health care rather than incarceration or hospitalization."

The County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) has contracted with local nonprofit StarVista to train and supervise clinicians, who will be embedded with each city's police department based on need.

Public safety 9-1-1 dispatchers will deploy the clinicians along with police officers to calls with individuals suspected of experiencing mental or behavioral health crises. Once officers declare the scene safe, clinicians will assess the individual and determine the best methods of immediate care.

BHRS Director Scott Gilman noted that there is no one single solution in crisis response and this new pilot provides another tool that officers can use.

“BHRS is proud to help bring additional mental health resources to local law enforcement response,” Gilman said. “The partnership among responding officers and mental health clinicians will provide additional tools to promote de-escalation and safe resolution.”

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University will independently evaluate the intervention and assessment methods used by the clinicians and cities to help refine the program as needed.

Under a cost-sharing agreement, the four participating cities will contribute \$408,388 and the County will contribute \$468,388 for each of two years, for a two-year total of approximately \$1.5 million.

**City Media Contacts:**

Leslie Arroyo, South San Francisco communications director  
[Leslie.arroyo@ssf.net](mailto:Leslie.arroyo@ssf.net); (650) 829-6603

Alison Gilmore, San Mateo Police Department PIO  
[pdpio@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:pdpio@cityofsanmateo.org); (650) 522-7626

Stephen Stolte, Daly City assistant city manager  
[sstolte@dalycity.org](mailto:sstolte@dalycity.org); (650) 991-8126

Jennifer Yamaguma, Redwood City communications manager  
[jyamaguma@redwoodcity.org](mailto:jyamaguma@redwoodcity.org); (650) 780-7305

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