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Behavioral Health Unit: Case Study at the Portland Police Department
Anne Sedlack of University of Southern Maine. Mentor: Paula Gerstenblatt of University of Southern Maine

Abstract
There are 8,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States. 1,000 have some form of specialized policing and response presence - which means that they have at least a few officers who are crisis intervention trained (CIT). 200 of these law enforcement agencies have some form of program that is beyond a few cop officers trained in CIT. In 2016, there were 6 departments that were awarded a grant from the Department of Justice and Bureau of Justice Assistance. These six are currently learning sites dedicated to studying the affects of having a behavioral health specialized co-response team. The Portland Police Department and its’ mental health co responder unit is one of the six law enforcement agencies. The goal of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the Behavioral Health Unit and it’s impact on the greater Portland community for the police department, community partners and clients.

Results
Flow of Services

Discussion
There are only six learning sites in the United States that are dedicated to a true co-responders model, which pairs mental health professionals with police officers. There is not a lot of research out there so this study was meant to be a cursory look at how the Behavioral Health Unit operates and how close it gets to meeting their mission.

The Portland Police Department’s Behavioral Health Unit seems to be making the best with what they have. The times that it misses it mark, like not having 24 hour coverage, are issues with funding not with operation. All of the interviewees spoke to the success the program has with collaboration and connecting clients with already established resources.

References

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