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Addiction & Mental Health Services | services de lutte contre les dépendances et de santé mentale
Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Innovative Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team Now Operating in Kingston

On 2 October 2019 the Kingston Police and Addiction and Mental Health Services of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (AMHS-KFLA) initiated a cooperative program to better serve persons suffering with mental health and addiction issues in the city of Kingston.

The Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT) program involves experienced crisis workers from AMHS-KFLA partnering with specially trained front-line officers from the Kingston Police. These teams will respond to emergency and non-emergency mental health calls from within the community, with the aim of not only improving the quality and timeliness of police response but also reducing police apprehension rates, which have a heavy impact on both police and emergency room resources.

MCRRT programs have been implemented in other municipalities throughout Ontario, most notably in Hamilton where the Hamilton Police and St. Joseph's Hospital have successfully partnered in mental health response for over 22 years. In February 2017, as a result of observed successes in other communities such as Hamilton, the Kingston Police began to research the model with a view to developing a similar program for the Kingston area.

By the end of 2017, after further community consultation and data collection, the Kingston Police had laid a framework for the MCRRT program and had principally secured a partnership with AMHS-KFLA, which has been a long-time collaborator in mental health response.

In April 2018, the Kingston Police requested and received approximately one million dollars from the Province of Ontario under the Policing Effectiveness and Modernization Grant to assist with staffing, training, and equipping teams to respond under the MCRRT program. This grant money assisted in 12 Kingston Police officers receiving specialized Crisis Intervention Training supported through the Hamilton Police, and further support from the Province of Ontario through a three-year Community Safety and Policing Grant will help to ensure the success of the MCRRT program.

We envision a number of benefits to result from the implementation of this program. In addition to enhancements to the quality of service provided to persons in crisis, we anticipate dramatic reductions in the number of mental health apprehensions (currently in the range of 40 percent), which will thereby reduce the number of police hours spent in the emergency department.

Similarly, this program will further enhance officers' crisis response and de-escalation skills through positive modelling and feedback in working closely with experienced mental health crisis workers and clinicians.

The Kingston Police and AMHS-KFLA are both pleased and extremely excited for the opportunity to forge ahead with this new model of cooperation and, as a result, anticipate significant improvements in the quality of service for persons suffering with mental health and addiction-related issues.

Quotations

"On average, the Kingston Police respond to four mental health calls per 24-hour period; of those, 40 percent result in an apprehension under the Mental Health Act. Each apprehension involves two officers spending considerable time at the hospital through this process.

"The overarching goal of the MCRRT program is to reduce the number of persons apprehended. This will not only assist the Kingston Police in terms of front-line resources but also help individuals to access the most appropriate care within the community. This collaboration with AMHS-KFLA will greatly assist in finding alternatives for mental health and addiction issues. It is also anticipated that this initiative will facilitate increased police referral to the Safe Bed Program, which provides care for those in crisis.

"The MCRRT program represents a more holistic approach for responding to persons in crisis and will also enable police resources to be redeployed to other core duties."

Antje McNeely, Chief of Police

"Through this collaborative partnership, we are offering an innovative, coordinated approach that is person-centred and is effectively diverting individuals from experiencing unnecessary emergency department visits to more appropriate services.

"We drew on other models of success across Ontario to ensure a standardized approach. Our implementation of this program demonstrates the shared willingness, hard work and commitment across all levels of AMHS-KFLA and the Kingston Police.

"It is amazing to see this coordinated team approach now available in the city of Kingston, which provides in-time access to a member of our Crisis Team and the Kingston Police. We are now addressing a chronic service need in the community.

"I am proud of the work our teams are doing and the benefit this service approach is having on individuals we collectively support."

Karen Berti, AMHS-KFLA Supervisor

“It’s very exciting to see AMHS-KFLA and the Kingston Police partner on a new initiative that responds to and assesses individuals who are in a crisis situation,” says Mayor Paterson. “This innovative model will help determine the best approach for the person in distress, ensuring they get the care they need while diverting unnecessary visits to emergency rooms and calls for emergency service. This type of social innovation helps the people who need it most and moves us forward as a community!”

Mayor Bryan Paterson, City of Kingston

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