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Immediate Release

CSG Justice Center Announces Six Law Enforcement Agencies to Become National “Learning Sites” on Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses

The [Council of State Governments \(CSG\) Justice Center](#), with assistance from a team of national experts and the U.S. Justice Department’s [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#), has selected six police departments to act as national law enforcement/mental health learning sites—agencies that will help other jurisdictions across the country improve their responses to people with mental illnesses. Selected were the Houston (TX) Police Department, Los Angeles (CA) Police Department, Madison (WI) Police Department, Portland (ME) Police Department, Salt Lake City (UT) Police Department, and University of Florida Police Department.

“BJA is eager to partner with CSG and each of the agencies selected for this initiative to promote the sharing of expertise among law enforcement agencies in developing specialized responses to persons with mental illnesses,” says Acting Director James H. Burch, II. “We value the shared commitment these agencies bring to this initiative to ensure public safety and effective system responses to this critical issue.”

Law enforcement agencies often find they are responding repeatedly to complex and time-consuming calls involving individuals with mental illnesses who are cycling through the criminal justice system—with serious consequences for the individual; the officer; at times, the community; and criminal justice system resources. Jurisdictions across the country are implementing strategies to improve the outcomes of these encounters that include training and tools that can provide a response that prioritizes treatment over incarceration when appropriate. Examples of these strategies include Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), co-responder, and case management models. This learning site project, to be managed by the Justice Center, will help agencies share how to tailor these strategies to the specific needs of a jurisdiction to create safer and better outcomes from these encounters.

“There is nothing more tragic than seeing someone with a mental illness become involved with the criminal justice system primarily because he or she has not received adequate treatment in the community,” said Indianapolis Public Safety Director and Justice Center board member Frank Straub. “The learning site project creates a forum for policing officials to learn from one another how to prevent those rare, but horrific encounters that result in injury or death; reduce repeat calls that take officers off the streets for long periods; and better link individuals to services when appropriate.”

The six learning sites will host site visits from interested colleagues and other local and state government officials over a two-year period, answer questions from the field, and work with Justice Center staff to develop materials for practitioners and their community partners.

Additional information about the learning sites project, including information about how to request technical assistance from the sites, is available on the project’s website at www.consensusproject.org/learningsites. Materials specifically about law enforcement strategies and related research can be found at www.consensusproject.org/issue_areas/law-enforcement. The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities (see www.justicecenter.csg.org).