

August Newsletter

CR-TTAC Newsletter

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Note from the Director

It's been a busy summer here at the CR-TTAC with regularly scheduled Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (MHFA) trainings and additional Co-Response Jail Diversion Program growth! My focus for this month however is a pressing issue that touches all of our communities and police departments; the effort to reduce opioid overdoses and deaths. Preliminary data just released by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), estimates that drug overdoses killed 72,000 Americans in 2017, a record number that reflects a rise of around 10 percent over 2016. According to the CDC, the death toll is higher than the peak yearly death totals from H.I.V., car crashes or gun deaths combined, painting a pretty bleak picture from around the country. In Massachusetts however, due in part to a strong public health campaign and increase in addiction treatment availability, there's reason for a little hope. Preliminary 2018 numbers from Massachusetts suggest that the death rate from overdoses is falling.

The recently passed opioid legislation seeks to strengthen these gains in Massachusetts. Under the newly signed law, hospital staff are required to either admit a patient struggling with an opioid addiction into an inpatient service or provide a referral to a community-based treatment program, when the patient expresses interest. The law also creates a commission to make recommendations about the credentialing of 'recovery coaches' and requires all prescribers to convert to electronic prescriptions by 2020. Additionally, the law expands access to medication-assisted treatment for people in several jails, a significant change given that data shows that people with a history of incarceration are 120 times more likely to die of an overdose than the general population. The hope is these new measures will continue to reduce the prevalence of opioid related overdoses in the Commonwealth. There is still work to be done to reduce the number of lives ending much too soon from these largely preventable and treatable conditions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Abbott
Jail Diversion Program Director

The Impact of the Framingham Jail Diversion Program



Interview with Deputy Chief Baker

Framingham Police Department Deputy Chief Lester Baker has worked alongside the Jail Diversion Program since its inception fifteen years ago. He has witnessed the growth of the co-responder program firsthand and has seen it through a variety of lenses. DC Baker was a patrolman when the first clinician, Dr. Sarah Abbott, joined the department in 2003, and he remembers how officers initially had their guard up. Baker noted, “I can think back to hearing comments such as, ‘I don’t want her in my car’, ‘Why do they have an office space here’, and now, you don’t go through a shift where there’s not an officer that’s willing to let them in their

car and take them out for an eight-hour shift.” DC Baker also saw the impact while serving as a patrol supervisor, and he worked hard to integrate the clinicians into the daily operations. He said, “Officers miss the clinicians when they are not here.” Baker discussed how helpful it is to have non-uniformed clinicians alongside uniformed officers on the scene to immediately de-escalate, provide assessment and link people to the appropriate services, often in lieu of an arrest.

Since being promoted to Deputy Chief (DC) earlier this year, Baker is now exposed to the “behind-the-scene” operations of the JDP program. At the monthly JDP operations meeting, he receives operational updates, monthly call statistics, program outcomes and assists with the creation of follow up plans for frequently encountered individuals. DC Baker noted that one of the strengths of the co-responder program is its’ flexibility and that it has grown and changed with the times. In the last 15 years it has evolved beyond just a resource for officers to use in mental health crises; it now includes death notification support, street-level opioid overdose outreach and debriefing officers exposed to traumatic events.

Given that there have been thirty-seven officers fatally shot in the line of duty since January 2018, DC Baker identified that police-based JDP clinicians have been useful when responding to individuals making threats. A recent police encounter with a Framingham resident highlights the range and depth of these services. This individual was making serious, violent threats towards police officers at the Framingham Police Department. While these threats were criminal in nature, officers suspected that they originated from an individual with a serious mental health condition and requested that the JDP clinicians assess the nature of the threats and their etiology. By immediately involving the clinicians, the individual received the acute mental health treatment that he needed while police continued their criminal investigation.

DC Baker noted that police departments across the country are struggling with how to respond to calls involving individuals with behavioral health conditions. He remarked that it’s interesting to him that these cities and towns are just now trying to implement something that Framingham has been doing for over fifteen years. In wrapping up the interview, DC Baker wanted to make sure that the JDP clinicians receive the recognition that he believes they deserve. Baker said, “The clinicians and officers that go out and do this every day do not hear ‘thank you’ enough, and what they do, what they have to see, what they have to listen to, they don’t hear ‘thank you’ enough.”

By Marissa Garofano, Training and Research Coordinator

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Public Safety Trainings

We are currently holding the following monthly trainings:

Location: Sudbury PD

September 12, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

October 10, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

November 14, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

December 12, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

To learn more about the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Trainings, please visit: www.jaildiversion.org or email Marissa Garofano.

[Request More Information](#)

We're Hiring!

We are seeking an independent, motivated, enthusiastic clinical professional to join our expanding team! We have multiple openings for clinicians in the following communities:
Framingham, Natick, and Franklin/Medway.



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