

MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CASE STUDY: Pima County, Ariz.



**POPULATION
APPROXIMATELY:
1,004,516¹**

**JAIL BED
CAPACITY:
2,377**

**AVERAGE
DAILY JAIL
POPULATION:
1,814²**

BACKGROUND

In 2005, members of the behavioral health, medical and criminal justice communities in Pima County, Ariz., in conjunction with county government, recognized the need for expanded and coordinated psychiatric crisis services in their fast-growing county. Increasing numbers of individuals with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders were straining law enforcement and health care resources. Many people in crisis were routinely taken to hospital emergency departments or jail by law enforcement due to the lack of alternatives and facilities that were designed for this purpose. The vision of the steering committee they formed was to create a central resource for law enforcement and emergency responders to take people experiencing a behavioral health crisis, where they can receive crisis services and be discharged back into the community with a service plan.

Community Partnership of Southern Arizona (CPSA),³ the state-contracted Regional Behavioral Health Authority that administers publicly-funded mental health and substance use services in Pima County, worked with the steering committee and the University of Arizona (UA) Health Network and UA College Of Medicine to create two new behavioral health care facilities: the Crisis Response Center (CRC) and the Behavioral Health Pavilion. These two facilities were created with input from behavioral health and medical care systems, law enforcement, families and potential consumers to ensure they best met the community's needs. In 2006, two bond packages were approved by more than 60 percent of Pima County voters, totaling \$54 million for the new facilities.

CRISIS RESPONSE CENTER

The Crisis Response Center (CRC) opened in August 2011 and is the "one-stop" hub of a comprehensive, coordinated crisis-care network. With services provided by Connections Southern AZ and the Crisis Response Network of Southern Arizona through funding from CPSA, the CRC is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year. The CRC offers a range of recovery-focused services for adults and children experiencing a mental-health or substance-use crisis.

CRISIS RESPONSE CENTER SERVICES

- CRC call center/Communitywide Crisis Line
- Mobile Acute Crisis (MAC) Teams
- Crisis stabilization services for adults and children/youth
- Subacute inpatient care for adults
- Law enforcement/first responder transfers
- Non-emergency crisis transportation services
- Peer and family support
- Court-ordered evaluations for civil commitment
- Co-located Comprehensive Service Provider (CSP) staff
- Co-location of HOPE Warm Line
- Co-location of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Southern Arizona

CPSA's ongoing collaboration with government, law enforcement, health organizations, and advocacy and peer-run groups helped create a welcoming, supportive facility to help individuals and their families stabilize from a crisis and return safely to the community. Clients and family members at the CRC have access to advocacy, peer and family support, and service providers that can coordinate ongoing care and support recovery.

For more information on the Crisis Response Center and its services, visit www.cpsaarizona.org/AboutUs/Pages/Crisis-Response-Center.aspx

LAW ENFORCEMENT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAMS

The increasing need for a different law enforcement approach has changed the way Pima County responds to people experiencing mental health crises. Both the Pima County Sheriff's Office and the Tucson Police Department have initiated special mental health teams to respond to service calls for people with mental illnesses. Members of each agency's teams receive Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to learn how to respond to and intervene in situations involving people with mental illnesses. They work via a task force including the mental health court, mental health experts and treatment providers to improve individuals' contact with the criminal justice system.

If the specially trained officers are not available, patrol officers and deputies can call civilian behavioral health specialists – the Mobile Acute Crisis (MAC) Teams – to the scene, to help de-escalate the crisis. These MAC Teams respond to about 100 calls from law enforcement per month.

A vital part of the effort is the CRC, which does not turn away anyone in crisis dropped off by law enforcement agencies. The CRC was developed with a special sally port to facilitate transfers in a secure-access area, provide an area for officers to fill out their paperwork and make calls, and access a special courtroom. As a result, drop off times for law enforcement officers has fallen, getting them back on the streets more quickly.

POLICE SAY THEY CAN DROP OFF A PERSON AT THE CRC AND BE BACK OUT ON THE STREET HANDLING CALLS WITHIN 15 MINUTES OR LESS.

The law enforcement mental health support teams have contributed to changing the culture within their departments to one of policing with higher awareness and understanding of the community's mental health issues. The goal is to eventually expand the unit to include all local law enforcement agencies in the area, treatment specialists and mental health court staff as well.

OUTCOMES

In its first year alone, the CRC had a significant impact on Pima County residents and services:⁴

- The CRC provided crisis stabilization services to 12,840 individuals, an average of 917 individuals per month.
- The Community-Wide Crisis Line received approximately 10,000 calls per month that would have otherwise gone to 911 dispatchers or hospital switchboards.
- 95 percent of crisis line calls were stabilized in the community rather than using more costly and intensive resources like hospitals, psychiatric facilities or jails.

- There were 4,863 law enforcement transports to the CRC; all of these individuals would otherwise have gone to the jail or emergency department.
- MAC Teams responded to about 200 calls per month, half of which were from law enforcement. Because of this high demand, CPSA increased the number of MAC Teams from one to five.
- The opening of the CRC provided new employment for more than 200 Pima County residents, including professional behavioral health, business operations, nursing, peer and family staff.

THESE RESULTS HAVE GROWN IN THE PAST YEAR:⁵

- In FY14, there were 4,433 law enforcement transfers that saved 8,800 hours of law enforcement time, the equivalent of four full-time law enforcement officers. These savings grew to more than 9,000 hours (4.5 officers) in FY15.
- Of the 7,665 adults transferred to the CRC by law enforcement in FY14 and FY15, approximately 2,529 were diverted from jail, saving \$2,934,162 in jail costs.
- In FY14, 529 adults were transferred from emergency departments to the CRC after being stabilized to receive further crisis services, thus saving \$219,159 in emergency department costs. In FY15, 1,101 adults and youth were transferred, saving \$456,138.

RESOURCE

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END NOTES

¹ "Pima County, Arizona". Accessed September 9, 2015. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/04/04019.html>

² As of June 22, 2015. Memorandum from C.H. Huckleberry, County Administrator to Pima County Board of Supervisors, July 6, 2015.

³ Community Partnership of Southern Arizona is a subsidiary of Community Partners, Inc., which offers behavioral health consultation, administrative support services, housing resources, behavioral health services and a full-service conference center.

⁴ Crisis Response Center Annual Report, www.cpsaarizona.org/AboutUs/Documents/bd-crc%20annual%20report.pdf

⁵ Presentation by Neal Cash, "The Friendly Front Door: An Effective, Community-Based Crisis Service System" on Webinar: Stepping Up: Effective Strategies for Law Enforcement and Diversion, September 10, 2015.