



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

David S. Keller, Commissioner
Commissioners' Office
14 North Main Street
Chambersburg, PA 17201
717-261-3812
dskeller@franklincountypa.gov

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Franklin County Program Earns National Achievement Award

May 18, 2018 – Chambersburg, PA – Franklin County has been recognized for a Justice Public Safety Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the South County Mental Health Co-Responder Program in the category of Criminal Justice and Public Safety. The award honors innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.

The Mental Health Co-Responder Program embeds a mental health co-responder into local law enforcement agencies in Greencastle, Waynesboro, and Washington Township to connect individuals identified as being in crisis with community based supportive services. When police are dispatched for an incident where the behavior does not escalate to the level of police officer custody, the mental health co-responder is called to begin a screening and risk assessment process to determine the needed level of care. In addition to helping reduce the number of individuals with mental health issues involved in the criminal justice system, the program has also helped connect a lot of senior citizens with services.

The Mental Health Co-responder Program, funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, has directly touched the lives of 200 Franklin County residents in the last year. To date, Kay Martin, Keystone Mental Health Community Liaison/Co-responder, has had over 950 interactions with individuals in crisis.

“A crisis program must be accessible to the community at all times and welcome anyone in need of services. Keystone’s partnership with law enforcement regarding individuals with mental illness has been a game changer as we have worked very closely with law enforcement to divert individuals with behavioral health needs into more appropriate treatment settings than the county jail,” stated Joanne Cochran, President and CEO, Keystone Health.

Last week, Cori Seilhamer, Franklin County Mental Health Program Specialist and Certified CIT Coordinator, presented information to the Board of Commissioners regarding the success of the Mental Health Co-responder program in diverting individuals away from the criminal justice system. Since the program’s inception in April 2017, there have been 34 individuals diverted from arrest and/or charges.

Commissioner Chairman Dave Keller said, “The Mental Health Co-Responder Program is reducing the number of individuals involved in the criminal justice system and freeing up police to focus on the safety and security of the community. Thanks to Keystone Health and local law enforcement, we are better able to connect our residents to services they need.”

“This program saves tax dollars in many ways and I’m proud that Franklin County is a leader in justice, mental health, and drug and alcohol initiatives,” said Commissioner Bob Thomas.

NACo will recognize award-winning counties at its 2018 Annual Conference and Exposition July 13-16 in Nashville/Davidson County, Tennessee.

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