

Sacramento County Mental Health Board Community Wellness Response Team (CWRT) Advisory Committee

MINUTES – TELECONFERENCE MEETING Tuesday, June 13, 2023 6:00PM – 8:00PM

Members Present: Severine Hollingsworth, Kaino Hopper, Corrine McIntosh Sako, Adam Wills, (staff: Glenda Basina)

Members Absent: Elijah Orr, Alexandria Paige,

County Staff: Nina Acosta, Jennifer Reiman, Kelli Weaver, Christina Irizarry, Karen Sprague, Alondra Thompson, Raina Cole

Guests: Dr. Sonia Pellerin, Angela Talent, Kelsey Long, Emily Martin, Meg White, Vinnie Cervantes, Myke Gayent, Sandra Funk, Ryan McClinton, Steven Murphy, Natanya Kharat

Agenda Item

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Acknowledgement of Conduct Agreement

Co-Chair Hollingsworth commenced the meeting at 6:04pm and introductions were made. Conduct Agreement acknowledged with Co-Chair sharing it onscreen for all.

Chair Sako introduced Vinnie/Star with background of wanting to partner/connect, build collaboration with them.

III. Presentation on the [Denver Support Team Assisted Response \(STAR\) Program](#) & the [STAR Community Advisory Committee](#), Vinnie Cervantes, Denver STAR Community Advisory Committee Member

Vinnie founded Dasher in 2018. Did criminal justice reform work. Dasher work is with non-police programs in Colorado. Dasher drove work to Star. In 2019 looked at Cahoots program, how it functions and how it would work for Denver. Star started June 2020, delayed due to pandemic. Pilot initially funded with \$200k with paramedic and mental health clinician. Was/is not 24/7. City spent ¼ response. Moved from public safety to a program in public health in 2021. 911 dispatcher makes decision on whether to send police or Star. Community sees police with Star because of this. Operates 6am-10pm, 7 days a week with 6 vans and 16 teams of responders. Star only responding to 30% currently. Hopes to expand to 30 teams and more vans. The advisory committee took part in creating the program. Some racism with the program. Last September committee meeting was discontinued due to issues. As of March, meetings continued by City of Denver. Star is great and can be better. Hoping to expand to be 24/7. Committee consists of 15 members.

Chair Sako heard about their advisory committee at time CWRT was being created and reached out to Vinnie for their experiences. Similar struggles experienced.

Member Hopper asked if they used mediation as a format for dialogue for full cooperation/support from sheriff department. Vinnie responded that he's not a public friend of police and that one of the members reached out to the Chief, who was on board with the idea. It's reduced police time, saving their resources which appealed to them. These types of talking point with the right person is important.

Angela asked about challenges and how they were overcome. Per Vinnie, he was involved in the program created and struggled to have a seat at the table. The City was mostly in charge, the narrative of what it is. This was the problem. In 2021 after expansion team concluded, a press conference was held where they said this was their program, demanding for a seat at the table, building people power and always putting community at the table.

Chair Sako asked how to get the word out of our program; a community model, not looted in law enforcement response. Per Vinnie, 911 in Denver is separate from police department. In Denver there's 911, EMS, police and fire. A 4th category added Star. If Star is not available, the caller is asked if they want police instead. Also, community education. Vinnie doesn't support co-responder hierarchy because police always take over. Supports community responder over co-responder. 988 is a mess in Colorado and not fully implemented yet.

Adam inserted that Mental Health First has lots of similarities and dealing with police is adversarial. Feels very privileged to be in this committee. Police advocating for more mental health beds in jails. The further from police on mental health calls, the better. Rule of all non-criminal calls to come to CWRT. Asked how many mental health calls did Vinnie have quarterly, etc. in the Denver area? How many people/vans going out a night. Vinnie responded that for Star around 500 calls per month were responded to. Doesn't know about co-responder numbers. Adam asked if people funneling calls have assessment training. Vinnie said they were trained but could have been a lot better. For the vans, due to 3 shifts overlapping in the middle of the day, has 3 vans out at a time. Downtown was the biggest concentration of calls. Ryan asked for 911 data if any available, determining the type of calls. Curious to see if 911 dispatch have such data.

Chair Sako stated that she became aware that law enforcement may not be aware of CWRT, for calls for service that have behavioral health component. It highlights politics of this program. Spoke about CWRT bylaws to give teeth/power to the committee as approved by MHB and its membership exclusion criteria.

IV. Update from BHS on CWRT Program Implementation, Including Data & Response Outcomes

<https://dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS/SiteAssets/Pages/Community-Wellness-Response-Team/CWRT%20Timeline%20May%202023.pdf>

a. Coordinated Collaboration between 988/WellSpace, BHS Community Support Team, & BHS Mobile Crisis Support Team with BHS Community Wellness Response Team, Christina Irizarry - Manager, Mobile Crisis Support Team, Alondra Thompson – Manager, Community Support Team & CWRT and 988/WellSpace Direct Line Supervisors & Manager

Alondra spoke on launch. As of 3/15/23, 25 calls. Calls increasing requesting CWRT to go out and respond. Continues to hire and interview. Excited for growth of 988. Ask committee to join in presentation to acknowledge work to the community of the County. A lot of outreach last month and most recently the Pride event downtown and NAMI. Upcoming Juneteenth. Getting word out about CWRT. Updating site the last Thursday of the month with all presentations.

Ryan McClintock covering work with public health advocates with studies in California and the country. Studying Stockton's response with a little more focus. Carelink started by a non-profit clinic, using ARPA funds. Now looking at sustainability with City funding. Asked staff how willing sheriff has been with CWRT. In Stockton, chief had presenters at daily roll calls to remind them of the response program. Adam added he likes that law enforcement refers to mental health responder, who won't shoot.

Vice-Chair Hollingsworth asked when they can join events to participate. Would love to see how they can help promote. Alondra to reach out with date/time. One tomorrow night. Kelli on Ryans questions, share with folks we have had mobile crisis support team/a co-response since 2015. Has funding up to 11 teams. Added that Jennifer Reiman engages with law enforcement and invited Reiman to share experience with law enforcement. Reiman started going out to 5150, now domestic violence and tells law enforcement to go away. They talk with SWAT on how to work with negotiating. Takes steps to build relationship. Now going to academies on doing co-response on how to queue each other. How to communicate as peace officers, be there with counselor and officer with compassion. A lot of calls that can be taken in by CWRT. Coordination, cooperation with law enforcement for need of backup, for the 1% of the calls. Healthy conversations. Hope to get stories from CWRT to pass along.

Sandra at 988 accepts warm transfers in, from FBI for situations to be able to dispatch to CWRT. Ryan has seen from research done by UC Davis with data, problem in Sacramento stuck in silos, having people fall in the cracks. Reiman good time now where law enforcement wanting to work with the various response teams. Chair Sako invites Reiman to attend these meetings more. Christina commented BHS not wanting a single program but a continuum and to have law enforcement on the table so they can defer to us.

Vice-Chair Hollingsworth asked what's happening with BACS. Also had an issue of a caller who didn't get help. Asked when more teams are getting in. Kelli responded that the board did approve funding for BACS, in process of recruiting/hiring. Emily overseeing the program, now expanding for CWRT. Actively recruiting/hiring. Have 2 staff transferring to CWRT to spearhead team. Hiring is very competitive. Hiring for alternative shift/hours, very challenging. Encourages everyone to hire for people who can give the care. Per Kelli BACS to recruit, hire and train. Goal to be fully staffed by September. County doing the same thing. Tough workforce right now. Sandra confirmed workforce challenge, maybe due to people having the option to work remotely. Kelli remaining optimistic, putting word out in diverse community. Vice-Chair Hollingsworth pushing, promoting but not ready. Chair Sako responded the demand has been there wanting this to go. Important to talk about how 988 to get CWRT out there. Vice-Chair Hollingsworth thinks we should stop talking about it. Reiman responded it's important to be transparent. Ryan McClintock on staff and advisory body, historical reality is we tend to operate at floor of our abilities, we have a charge and that's what we go by. We subcontract with organizations that are already knowledgeable/skilled in this work. The Advisory to give recommendations. Member Wills agreed with Ryan's statement and added a policy to increase beds to bring the people to.

Angela commented that she's hearing a lot of mental health and wondering what/how about intersectional of disabilities aside from mental health, is there any plan? Per Alondra, she works with disability rights team equipped to serve anyone. Disability Advisory Committee want to be a part of this and to make it successful. Reiman added a shout out for equipment for communication staff. Any technology to make it easier to communicate. Medically tailored respite places to figure out resources.

b. Questions from Committee Members & Members of the Public

- V. Public Comment (3 minutes per person),** Members of the Public
Public Comment 1 (Meg). Thanks everyone for work they're doing. Shared personal experience for non-police response from mental health. Has been tough so far. At 11am and hours later gets the return call from CWRT. On job shortage maybe it's the pay.

Public Comment 2 (Kelsey). Revisit for other folks on advisory. Highlight reality on workforce.

Many people wanting to do this work. Hard to feel motivated without a lot of competitive offering and reality of not many beds available. We as first responders can be a resource. Also to note, admits doesn't know the role of this meeting. Suggests for a recap at beginning of meeting of what this meeting is, can help.

Chair Sako reminded that MHB made recommendations regarding the workforce challenge; increase compensation and make it competitive. This to remain on MHB radar.

Public Comment 3 (Ryan). As county is giving folks a raise, give Alondra a raise. Hopes with mental health support benefit package, look at those salaries of law enforcement/fire fighters. Clinicians require a lot training, a needed lens. If this is a 4th arm of public safety, see their comparison with law enforcement/fire.

Public comment 4 (Lantanya). A behavioral health analyst working at a public school. Had a student unsafe to himself and contacted police and they would not take student. Reason is he was too young and not in episode. Called at 10am and they didn't come until 3 hours later. A reason this type of work doesn't work with law enforcement. At school level cannot go further than contacting police department.

VI. Adjournment

Co-Chair Hollingsworth adjourned the meeting at 8:17pm.

Meetings held 2nd Tuesday of each month from 6pm – 8pm

Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday July 11, 2023