



Temple Police Department's Co-Responder Program Builds Trust to Enhance Mental Health Response

A program created by the [Temple Police Department](#) is setting a new standard for law enforcement agencies across the nation.

The Temple PD Co-Responder Program has made significant strides in addressing mental health crisis calls by equipping officers with the skills to handle mental health crises and integrating mental health professionals directly into their response teams.

This program's origins trace back to Temple PD's participation in the [One Mind Campaign](#). Created by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the campaign aims to improve how law enforcement respond to mental health crises through comprehensive training and partnerships with mental health organizations.

Temple PD's Deputy Chief Mac Fairey said Police Chief Shawn Reynolds saw an opportunity through the campaign to enhance their approach to mental health.

"Our chief is very passionate about mental health programs," Fairey said. "When you have a leader that is passionate about something, it's easier to redirect and go in that direction."

For Temple PD to join the One Mind Campaign, every officer had to receive mental health crisis intervention training, and the department had to establish sustainable partnerships with community mental health organizations.

As part of the police department's training academy, new recruits undergo up to 48 hours of mental health training, followed by an intensive 40-hour crisis intervention team (CIT) training program. The training program includes specialized modules on interacting with individuals with autism, suicide prevention, and self-care for officers.

By equipping officers with these essential skills, Temple Police ensures they are prepared to handle mental health crises with empathy and expertise.



The Temple Police Department's Deputy Chief, Mac Fairey, in the community.

Temple PD partnered with the local mental health authority, [Central Counties Services](#), to place mental health professionals alongside police officers in the field. These co-responders provide immediate support during mental health emergencies and offer long-term care solutions.

Fairey said a big part of the program's success is how it built trust within the community. People experiencing a mental health crisis often have a complicated history with law enforcement. Introducing a civilian co-responder can deescalate situations more effectively and be less intimidating to people experiencing a mental health crisis.

"When we bring in an outside agency into the police department, they have to build trust with our patrol officers," Fairey said. "Without that trust, the officers won't utilize the co-responders effectively. Our co-responder now is like family."

By building trust, officers became more comfortable calling on co-responders for assistance, even in minor incidents. The increased frequency of calls to co-responders further proves the program's success. Initially, they were only called for major incidents, but now officers routinely seek their help.

The impact of the co-responder program is best illustrated through its success stories. Fairey recounted a recent incident involving a person threatening to jump from a building. A mental health professional with the co-responder program convinced the person to step back from the edge, leading to a positive resolution.

"Before the co-responder program, we never would have called a mental health co-responder to a scene involving a suicidal subject," Fairey said. "Now, with the program in place, we can establish a relationship and connect people to long-term care, which has led to better outcomes."

The co-responder program has significantly reduced the number of repeat law enforcement calls for service. Those receiving appropriate mental health care are less likely to have another crisis, which is one of several long-term benefits Temple PD officers have seen through the co-responder model.

The co-responder program is funded by Central Counties Services, with the state covering additional costs due to the high volume of calls. Plans are underway to expand the program to include evening and night shifts, ensuring mental health support is available around the clock.

Temple PD aims to expand the co-responder program and continue strengthening their partnership with Central Counties Services. A planned jail diversion center slated to open in August will further enhance the department's ability to provide mental health care and reduce incarceration rates for people with mental health issues.

The Temple PD Co-Responder Program is an example of how law enforcement can collaborate with mental health professionals to create a safer and more supportive community. By building trust and recognizing the value of co-responders, Temple PD has not only improved their response to mental

health crises, but also set a national best practice for others to follow. This program highlights the importance of comprehensive training, sustainable partnerships, and the critical role of trust in enhancing the effectiveness of mental health interventions in law enforcement.



Additional Resources

- [Developing and Implementing Your Co-Responder Program.](#) The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2021.
- [Expanding First Response: A Toolkit for Community Responder Programs.](#) The Council of State Governments Justice Center.
- [Enhancing Law Enforcement Engagement with Individuals with Mental Health Conditions.](#) One Mind Campaign.



In the News

- [Temple PD brings on staff member to respond to mental health calls thanks to new partnership.](#) KXXV, 2021.
- [Temple police working to improve response to mental health calls.](#) KCENTV, 2022.
- [One Mind: TPD Pledges to Continue, Expand Mental Health Training, Resources.](#) City of Temple.