

## Waco Police Department: Innovative data collection and triage approach to mental health calls for service

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When Social Resource Coordinator DeAngela Bynum was hired to work within Waco Police Department (Waco PD) by Prosper Waco's Waco Connect program in 2021, officers were spending up to 18 hours a month on emergency detention orders (EDOs) for individuals with suspected mental illness. Community options outside of the hospital emergency department were limited, particularly during afterhours and on weekends. Bynum focused her initial outreach on providing direct resource linkage to high acuity and high frequency individuals ("high utilizers") detained with homicidal or suicidal ideation. She also provided crisis support by phone to patrol officers in the field before turning her attention to the process and systems capturing this information.



"The first few months of work with Waco PD was both exciting and draining all at once. There was so much work to be done with this population and only one of me," Bynum shared. After two months, Bynum noticed a discrepancy between the individuals the reporting system captured and who law enforcement officers were reporting frequent encounters with.

Waco PD was averaging 32-38 EDOs a month, but few of those involved the same individuals. Bynum knew that officers were reporting repeated encounters with the same individuals, but the records she reviewed from the records management system did not capture dispatched encounters with high utilizers that didn't result in police action. The data system was not capturing the time and effort police spent daily on diversion with the high utilizers that Bynum wanted to reach most, making it difficult to quantify the problem for Waco PD leadership.

"After more investigation and tracking of these consumers, I found that with each month came a new set of people experiencing the same crisis issues. That is when I knew that we needed to change tactics."

Bynum assembled a group to study and streamline the process for EDOs that included the Waco PD, Waco Connect social resource coordinators,

hospital emergency departments, and the local mental health authority, Heart of Texas Behavioral Health Network (BHN) and its Crisis Treatment Center (CTC).

Bynum also worked closely with patrol officers, supervisors, and sergeants to create a Mental Health/Transport Call Out Form to capture the hours spent on these EDOs and translate them into staffing costs. In 2021, the average time on an EDO was 11.52 hours per incident, a cost of over \$335,000 for time on calls related to mental health reports for two officers at their base pay.

Bynum and Waco PD met with BHN to discuss a process change to direct some officers to send all involuntary non-medical EDOs to its CTC rather than the hospital ED. The CTC agreed to complete a psychiatric evaluation to any involuntary non-medical person police brought in.

Waco PD approved a controlled pilot, wherein "A group" officers would utilize the new process through the CTC for all non-medical EDOs, while "B group" officers would proceed with no change to their diversion process of voluntary non-medical EDOs through the ED. All officers would use the new form and sergeants would review and input data for their platoons.

The results were immediate, and within weeks a picture of time and cost savings emerged for officers using the new process. For all EDOs (medical priority and non-medical) "A group" reported an average of 6.1 hours and "B group" reported 10.28 hours per incident. This amount of time overall was a win, but the data collected on "A group" non-medical EDOs showed the biggest drop from the 11.52 hours to 1.5 hours per incident. Bynum then compared the new process (yielding an average of 1.5 hrs. per EDO) to the control "B group" showing 11.11 hours on average. The time spent per hour translated into significant cost savings. At the outset of implementation in May 2022, Waco PD was spending \$21,103 monthly for EDOs. Four months after the implementation of the new procedures, that number fell to \$8,658.

"As we began to make changes, we saw immediate results. Our officers began to buy in quickly with the reduced time they were spending on calls. I am happy to say that bringing Deangela on to our team is the best move we have made as an agency. Her efforts have been amazing, and she is an asset to our team and the success of this program," said Commander Wallace.

By shifting her focus to improving processes, Bynum was able to unite people within her organization and the larger Waco community to improve care for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and save time and money for Waco's municipal police department. Waco PD ultimately used some of these cost savings to hire DeAngela on permanently. Waco PD continues to refine this process and today all officers use the Mental Health Data Forms to track efforts to initially divert involuntary non-medical EDOs to the CTC rather than the hospital.

**Resources:**

[Prosper Waco Annual Report August 2021-August 2022](#)

**Mental Health / Transport Call Out Form**

Entered into Excel by:

**Case Information**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Sequence Number \_\_\_\_\_ Call Type \_\_\_\_\_  
 NRPT  INVESTIGATION Case # \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Dispatched \_\_\_\_\_ Time Dispatched \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Closed \_\_\_\_\_ Time Closed \_\_\_\_\_  
Work group on duty at time of dispatch  1A  2A  3A  1B  2B  3B

**On Scene Activity**

Police Response:  EDO  Voluntary Commit  Magistrates Warrant  Jail  Other  
Transported by:  AMR  PD  MCOT  NONE  OTHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Was ICARE Called?  YES  NO Time Called \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
Did MCOT respond by phone?  YES  NO  N/A Time \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
Did MCOT respond on scene?  YES  NO  N/A Time \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Facility Process**

Where was basic medical clearance completed?  CTC  PROV  HILLCREST  N/A  
Where was individual triaged / psych eval done?  CTC  PROV  HILLCREST  N/A  
Caseworker / Nurse Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Was individual referred to a hospital?  NO  PROV  HILLCREST  N/A  
If not completed at CTC / Referred to hospital, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was Paladin requested?  YES  NO  
Paladin Time requested \_\_\_\_\_ Paladin Time Responded \_\_\_\_\_

**Officer Information**

Primary Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Officer \_\_\_\_\_  
Relief Officer #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Relief Officer #2 \_\_\_\_\_

**ICARE**  
**1-866-752-3451**