

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 13-20

INTRODUCED BY: Medical Student Section
(Yamini Vyas, Srikar Adibhatla, and Asha Kodan, University of
Maryland School of Medicine; and Prateek Gowda, The Johns
Hopkins University School of Medicine)

SUBJECT: Dispatching Health Professionals in Response to Mental Health-
Related 911 Calls

1 Whereas, One in four deaths from police shootings in the U.S. represents individuals with a
2 mental health illness according to the Treatment Advocacy Center¹; and
3
4 Whereas, According to the *2010-2014 Briefing Paper on Death in Police Encounters in*
5 *Maryland*, 38% of those who died in police shootings in Maryland presented in a manner
6 strongly exhibiting mental health disability or substance use²; and
7
8 Whereas, A poll by the Treatment Advocacy Center found that in 45% of police departments
9 surveyed, police officers had not received any form of crisis-intervention training³; and
10
11 Whereas, Despite current police training programs focused on teaching when to divert mentally
12 ill individuals to an appropriate intervention center or health facility, there still remains three
13 times as many severely mentally ill persons in the U.S. in prisons and jails than those receiving
14 treatment in a hospital⁴; and
15
16 Whereas, 25% of the total 20,5000 population of inmates and detainees statewide in 2017 were
17 diagnosed with a mental illness according to Maryland state code – about four to six times higher
18 than the general population^{5, 6}; and
19
20 Whereas, The 2018 RIGHT Care pilot program in Dallas, Texas has begun diverting emergency
21 911 calls that are mental health-related as decided by a licensed psychiatric social worker at the
22 dispatched center to a team comprised of a social worker, a paramedic, and a police officer⁷; and
23
24 Whereas, Nearly 30% of patients served by the RIGHT Care program have been diverted from
25 jail or the emergency room and 20% of these patients have been connected to mental health
26 services in the area⁸; and
27
28 Whereas, The RIGHT Care program has decreased the number of arrests by 8% and has
29 decreased the number of quality of life citations (disorderly conduct, public intoxication, etc.) by
30 10% between pre-launch and 2019 in the targeted zip codes despite an overall increase in the
31 remainder of the city⁸; and
32

33 Whereas, Due to the success of the RIGHT Care Program, there is planned expansion to the
34 entire city of Dallas this year, and similar initiatives will be started in Tulsa, Oklahoma and
35 Abilene, Texas⁷; and
36

37 Whereas, on March 12, 2018, DeCynthia Clements, diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar
38 disorder, was fatally shot by Illinois police who failed to contact a professional trained in mental
39 crisis intervention when Clements refused to get out of her car during an episode⁹; and
40

41 Whereas, on July 1, 2020, Ricky Walker Jr. was experiencing a behavioral health crisis when he
42 was shot by police officers who did not contact their internal mental health crisis response team
43 nor the nonprofit Baltimore Crisis Response Inc¹⁰; therefore be it
44

45 Resolved, that MedChi supports the establishment of partnerships between police department
46 and mental health professionals to address the decriminalization of mental health illness and the
47 establishment of pilot programs in high need areas that dispatch a trained mental health
48 professional alongside law enforcement associated with 911 calls characterized as a mental
49 health crisis.
50

51
52 Fiscal Note: Included in existing legislative advocacy budget.

53
54 **References:**

- 55 1. Fuller, Doris, et al. "Overlooked in the Undercounted." Treatment Advocacy Center, Dec. 2015.
- 56 2. "Briefing Paper on Deaths in Police Encounters in Maryland, 2010-2014." American Civil Liberties Union
57 of Maryland, Mar. 2015.
- 58 3. Journal, Zusha Elinson | Photographs by Thomas Patterson for The Wall Street. "When Mental-Health
59 Experts, Not Police, Are the First Responders." Wall Street Journal, 24 Nov. 2018.
- 60 4. "More Mentally Ill Persons Are in Jails and Prisons Than Hospital: A Survey of the States," Treatment
61 Advocacy Center 2010.
- 62 5. Tully, M. (2018, August 14). Maryland grapples with national crisis of mental illness in jails. Retrieved
63 October 07, 2020, from [https://marylandreporter.com/2018/08/13/maryland-grapples-with-national-crisis-](https://marylandreporter.com/2018/08/13/maryland-grapples-with-national-crisis-of-mental-illness-in-jails/)
64 [of-mental-illness-in-jails/Ram Subramanian et al., Incarceration's Front Door: The Misuse of Jail in](https://marylandreporter.com/2018/08/13/maryland-grapples-with-national-crisis-of-mental-illness-in-jails/)
65 [America, Vera Institute of Justice \(2015\), \[http://www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org/wp-\]\(http://www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/incarcerationsfront-door-report.pdf\)](https://marylandreporter.com/2018/08/13/maryland-grapples-with-national-crisis-of-mental-illness-in-jails/)
66 [content/uploads/2015/01/incarcerationsfront-door-report.pdf](http://www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/incarcerationsfront-door-report.pdf).
- 67 6. Goss JR, Peterson K, Smith LW et al. Characteristics of suicide attempts in a large urban jail system with
68 an established suicide prevention program, *Psychiatric Services* 2002;53:574– 579.
- 69 7. Manfield, Lucas. "Dallas Has Been Dispatching Social Workers to Some 911 Calls. It's Working." Dallas
70 Observer, 10 Dec. 2019.
- 71 8. Miller, T. (2020). For Mental Health 911 Calls, Dallas Found Success In Social Workers - D Magazine.
72 Retrieved 28 September 2020, from [https://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2020/07/for-mental-health-](https://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2020/07/for-mental-health-911-calls-dallas-found-success-in-social-workers/)
73 [911-calls-dallas-found-success-in-social-workers/](https://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2020/07/for-mental-health-911-calls-dallas-found-success-in-social-workers/)
- 74 9. Hegarty, E. (2019, May 10). Decynthia Clements was shot twice in the head by Elgin cop, had cocaine in
75 her system, medical examiner's report says. Retrieved October 07, 2020, from
76 [https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/elgin-courier-news/ct-ecn-decynthia-clements-elgin-dead-st-](https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/elgin-courier-news/ct-ecn-decynthia-clements-elgin-dead-st-0502-story.html)
77 [0502-story.html](https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/elgin-courier-news/ct-ecn-decynthia-clements-elgin-dead-st-0502-story.html)
- 78 10. Fenton, J. (2020, July 06). Man shot by Baltimore Police officers during reported mental health crisis
79 charged with assault. Retrieved October 07, 2020, from [https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-](https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-man-shot-by-officers-charged-20200706-z6klodsjzjer5mrfxguybz5ypa-story.html)
80 [ci-cr-man-shot-by-officers-charged-20200706-z6klodsjzjer5mrfxguybz5ypa-story.html](https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-man-shot-by-officers-charged-20200706-z6klodsjzjer5mrfxguybz5ypa-story.html)

83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101

Supplemental Articles:

1. Baltimore Police officers shoot man after responding to behavioral crisis, officials say; man in critical condition - Baltimore Sun. (n.d.). Retrieved July 8, 2020, from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-5800-falkirk-shooting-20200701-53zwnbcre5hnhhlkixns5tpdcy-story.html#nws=true>
2. Social workers respond to mental health calls in Dallas. (n.d.). Retrieved July 8, 2020, from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90514022/this-program-sends-a-social-worker-on-911-calls-about-mental-health>
3. Taking The Cops Out Of Mental Health-Related 911 Rescues | Kaiser Health News. (n.d.). Retrieved July 8, 2020, from <https://khn.org/news/taking-the-cops-out-of-mental-health-related-911-rescues/>
4. Shooting of a man by Baltimore police highlights ‘total failure’ of city’s behavioral health response, agency says - Baltimore Sun. (July 11, 2020). Retrieved September 27, 2020, from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-police-mental-health-shooting-20200710-pij7rgqpdvchxkufmtq7p2vv2u-story.html>
5. Nearly 250 women have been fatally shot by police since 2015 - The Washington Post. (September 4, 2020). Retrieved September 27, 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/investigations/police-shootings-women/>