



**JUSTICE CENTER**  
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

## Specialized Policing Responses:

### Law Enforcement/Mental Health Learning Sites

Jurisdictions across the country are exploring strategies to improve the outcomes of encounters between law enforcement and people with mental illnesses. These efforts took root in the late 1980s, with the emergence of crisis intervention teams (CIT) and co-response models. As a growing number of communities engage in the development of specialized policing responses (SPRs), many grapple with the program design process, and are unsure how to tailor models from other jurisdictions to their own distinct problems and circumstances.

In an effort to expand the knowledge base for law enforcement agencies interested in starting or enhancing a SPR, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, with assistance from a team of national experts and the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), selected six police departments to act as national law enforcement/mental health learning sites. Located across the country, these learning sites represent a diverse cross-section of perspectives and program examples, and are dedicated to helping other jurisdictions across the country improve their responses to people with mental illnesses.

## Los Angeles Police Department

**Total number of agency personnel:** 12,909

Sworn: 9,959 Civilian: 2,950

**Total population served:** 4 million

**Jurisdiction and state:** Los Angeles, California

### Program Highlights

- Multi-layered approach including co-responder, CIT and follow-up teams
- Comprehensive data collection and information-sharing procedures
- Embedded mental health professionals in law enforcement agency

Los Angeles has implemented several complementary program responses to address the complex needs of the jurisdiction. For over four decades, the Los Angeles Police Department has deployed the Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) to assist police officers with mental health calls for service. Implemented in 1993, Los Angeles was one of the first communities to develop police/mental health co-responder teams (Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team, or SMART). This program was designed to better link people with mental illnesses with appropriate mental health services. In 2001, the department implemented a CIT program in pilot locations. Now any officer can enroll in the CIT training, although it is prioritized for those officers most likely to come in contact with people in a mental health crisis.

Even after implementing SMART and CIT training, a serious problem remained. A group of people with mental illnesses who repeatedly called the police or who were the subject of many calls for service were costing the city millions of dollars in emergency resources without positive outcomes. In 2005, the police department developed the Case Assessment and Management Program (CAMP) to identify and track the subjects of these repeat calls, and construct customized responses to their problems. The program co-locates a police detective with psychologists and social workers from the county mental health agency in the police department facility. This team develops long-term solutions to an individual's needs on a case-by-case basis.

The department incorporated the SMART and CAMP into the MEU to manage the programs and points of intersection. The MEU also maintains its long established Triage Unit that fields calls from patrol officers who have questions about what to do in certain situations involving people with mental illnesses. In these circumstances, the triage officer consults the MEU database (separate from the CAD system and protected from access outside the unit) to learn their history with the police. A triage mental health nurse sits alongside the officer and can check the databases in the Department of Mental Health to identify the case manager, psychiatrist, or treatment centers. Collectively, the triage staff determines whether to send out a SMART officer or have the officer take the person directly to a mental health facility. If the triage unit determines that this person has repeatedly contacted police (or been the subject of frequent calls for intervention), they will refer the person to the CAMP coordinator for follow-up.

<b>To learn more about the Las Angeles Police Department and their initiatives, contact:</b>	
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To learn more about the Law Enforcement/Mental Health Learning Sites, coordinated by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and supported by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), visit [www.consensusproject.org/learningsites](http://www.consensusproject.org/learningsites) or contact Whitney Kujawa ([wkujawa@csg.org](mailto:wkujawa@csg.org)/240-482-8577).

For more information about law enforcement responses to people with mental illnesses, visit [www.consensusproject.org/issue\\_areas/law-enforcement](http://www.consensusproject.org/issue_areas/law-enforcement).