Police Assisted Referral: Conduit to Care in a Public Housing System

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Funding for the Police Assisted Referral Program is generously provided by:
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Local Funding Partnership
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
- Cleveland Foundation, Diversity-Focused Funders
- Saint Luke’s Foundation

Partnership:
The Police Assisted Referral program (PAR) is a collaboration aligning the Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department (CMHAPD), Mental Health Services, Inc. (MHS), and the Began Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education. The program creates a conduit for officers to connect violence-exposed youth and families to violence-prevention services, education, and mental health screening and treatment. MHS capitalizes on the unique role of police officers as first responders to social crises and CMHAPD’s willingness to partner with community organizations to provide quality services to residents. Rooted in the natural convergence of the partners’ missions, PAR aims to:
1. Reduce risk of youth violence in the community.
2. Improve resiliency for violence exposed youth and families.
3. Improve police-citizen relationships.

Polling in a Public Housing System:
CMHAP is one of the ten largest housing authorities in the United States and its estates encompass two of the most violent neighborhoods in the United States. Ohio-certified and nationally accredited, CMHAP serves approximately 37,000 low-income residents, including over 4,000 children and youth, living in 26,000 public housing units and 24,000 privately-owned rental properties.

In 2010 CMHAPD responded to 4,852 crimes, including:
- 1,088 burglaries
- 1,574 drug-related offenses
- 651 thefts
- 457 domestic violence
- 562 other assaults
- 108 weapons violations

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Program Components:
1. Training
   - Officers are trained on the effects of violence exposure on the brain, youth development, domestic violence, and how to refer for key problems.
2. Referral
   - The officer calls the 24/7 hotline (linked to MHS) and gives basic information.
   - The resident receives a card (shown at left).
   - The resident is told to expect a call from a social worker within the next 24 hrs.
3. Treatment
   - An initial in-home evaluation visit is scheduled within 48hrs.-72hrs.
4. Follow-up
   - The referring officer receives a confirmation letter from the social worker.
   - A copy of this letter is sent to Chief González and is kept on record.

Support from command level officers has been key to the programs on-going success and expansion. PAR is a standard operating procedure at CMHAPD, Chief González assigns officers to act as liaisons with community partners, providing training to mental health workers, and track service data as part of their regular duties.

Results:
Police referred:
- A total of 2,340 individuals (shown at MHS).
- In 835 events each referral between 1 – 6 individuals.
- 198 weapons violations were steady over time with the majority generated from domestic violence calls.
- arrest were made at only 1.5% of events.

Data from MHS indicate that over 1,200 youth have received services stemming from these referrals – services include violence prevention education, clinical assessment, information & referral, crisis services, and on-going counseling.

Monthly Number of Cases Referred January 2010 – December 2011 (n=935)

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Next Steps:
Building from CMHAPD officers’ experiences and PAR community partners’ feedback, the program has expanded its scope of services to include:
- advanced youth development, domestic violence, and effects of violence exposure training;
- the addition of Community-School Liaisons, focused on helping violence-exposed youth succeed academically and connect to community programs;
- partners are planning a community evaluation to determine the program’s effect on police/citizen relationships;
- enhanced dialogue has begun with CMHAP Self-Sufficiency Coordinators to streamline service linkages;
- new explorations of the potential to use social-network analysis to help understand youth activity in the estates.

Acknowledgments:
We wish to express our sincere appreciation to Chief Andrés González and the Officers of CMHAPD for their commitment to PAR and their willingness to share both their experiences and knowledge. Mostly, we are grateful for the continuing dedication to the residents and community they serve.