

## ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENT – BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS UNIT (BHWU)

### PREAMBLE:

The Behavioral Health and Wellness Unit (BHWU) is a specially trained OPD unit that engages in a multidisciplinary community team approach. The BHWU uses trained mental health professionals who have extensive education and experience in the mental health field and sworn law enforcement officers for training, planning, implementing, and responding to behavioral health-related crisis situations. The BHWU addresses the need for early intervention and treatment of those with mental health concerns as a critical step in diverting these individuals from the criminal justice system, unnecessary hospitalization and any potential lasting impact of trauma.

### POLICY:

It is the policy of the Omaha Police Department (OPD) to utilize the Behavioral Health and Wellness Unit (BHWU) to strive to ensure the best opportunities for safe and successful resolutions to mental/behavioral health-related calls for service and to serve the community when in crisis. The BHWU also facilitates a variety of support functions for OPD employees.

### DEFINITIONS:

Co-Responder: Specially trained mental health professionals who are employed by OPD. See the OPD [“Mental/Behavioral Response – Adults”](#) policy for the full definition.

Outreach: Proactive response to individuals with behavioral health needs.

Self-Dispatch: Self-initiated response to a 911 call or incident.

### PROCEDURES

#### I. BHWU - General

- A. The BHWU is commanded by a lieutenant and consists of both sworn and non-sworn employees.
  1. The sworn outreach component of the BHWU, the Collaborative Outreach, Response, and Engagement Squad (CORE) is supervised by a sergeant.
    - a. CORE employees who are assigned OPD Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) shall adhere to the OPD [“Body Worn Cameras \(BWC\)”](#) policy.
  2. The non-sworn component of the BHWU, the Co-Responder Squad, is supervised by the OPD Mental Health Coordinator (non-sworn manager).
  3. The BHWU includes the Employee Resources Squad which is managed by a sergeant who collaborates with other BHWU employees. The squad facilitates a variety of support functions for OPD employees, including but not limited to: the management of FMLA, Injured on Duty/Workers' Compensation claims, off-duty injury processes, and timekeeping, proper application of collective bargaining agreement provisions and legal issues as they apply to OPD employees, Peer Support Team Leader and management of the Cordico digital app.
  4. The Peer Support Team is led by the Peer Support Team Leader. The Team is a group of specially trained employees who provide assistance and support to OPD employees during and after a critical incident and at other times as may be needed.

- B. There are several avenues by which BHWU employees interact with and contact community members in need of assistance, to include the following:
  - 1. When they respond to officer requests for assistance.
  - 2. When they Self-Dispatch to 911 calls.
  - 3. When they make in person, face-to-face contacts.
  - 4. When they conduct proactive Outreach (either in-person and/or by phone).
- C. Contacts with persons in the community who are experiencing a mental/behavioral health-related crisis that are initiated by the BHWU will include a sworn officer and a Co-Responder.
  - 1. CORE Squad and Co-Responder radio call signs are detailed in the OPD [“Radio Procedures – Signals, Codes, Call Signs and Related Information”](#) policy.
  - 2. If an OPD Co-Responder is unavailable, Mobile Crisis Response shall, if feasible, be requested via 911 Dispatch.
  - 3. Normally “Peer” units, with the exception of Peer 5, will have one (1) CORE officer and one (1) Co-Responder. Due to safety concerns, there may be incidents that necessitate an Adam UPB Unit or a second CORE officer to assist.
  - 4. A Peer Unit may at times need to request additional officer(s) to assist with transportation of arrestees or subjects who are being transported for Emergency Protective Custody.
- D. Documentation reminders include the following:
  - 1. All OPD employees shall complete an OPD Behavioral Health Incident Tracking Form (OPD [Form 78B](#)) after having contact with persons suspected of having a mental/behavioral health-related issue, per the OPD [“Mental/Behavioral Response – Adults”](#) and [“Mental/Behavioral Health Response – Juveniles”](#) policies.
  - 2. The letters “MH” shall be used after the call disposition code on all suspected mental/behavioral health-related incidents, per the OPD [“Radio Procedures – Signals, Codes, Call Signs, and Related Information”](#) policy.

## II. BHWU Active 911 Call Response

- A. Co-Responders will prioritize Self-Dispatch and response to 911 calls for service that have a mental/behavioral health component.

**EXAMPLES:** A person in crisis, domestic violence, check the well-being, EPC, involuntary or voluntary hospitalization, suicide attempts, completed suicides, death notification, threats, someone experiencing a traumatic event, substance use, etc.

- 1. On active 911 calls, a Co-Responder who is Self-Dispatching shall notify 911 Dispatch that they are en route to the scene.
- 2. Upon arrival the Co-Responder shall wait a safe distance from the scene while the UPB officers assess the situation. Safe distance determinations are on a case-by-case basis by responding officers and Co-Responders.

3. Once the scene is deemed safe, the UPB/CIT officers at the scene shall advise the Co-Responder that they are able to approach.
    - a. At times, when a scene is deemed safe by the responding officers, a second Co-Responder and/or CORE officer may be summoned to work with the initial Co-Responder, allowing the UPB officers to return to service. Criteria used to make this determination includes but is not limited to:
      - (1) The subject's propensity for violence.
      - (2) The subject's access to weapons.
      - (3) Consideration of whether or not the subject is a danger to self or others.
      - (4) The subject's criminal and committal history.
      - (5) Consideration of external influencing factors (i.e., additional individuals at the scene or who may arrive at the scene).
      - (6) Consideration of whether or not the subject is under the influence or in an altered state.
  4. UPB and CIT officers and the Co-Responder will debrief and communicate continuously throughout (before, during, and after) the incident.
- B. CORE officers shall prioritize the response to mental/behavioral health-related calls alongside a Co-Responder while on duty.

**EXAMPLES:** A person in crisis, domestic violence, check the well-being, EPC, involuntary or voluntary hospitalization, suicide attempts, completed suicides, death notification, threats, someone experiencing a traumatic event, substance use, etc.

### III. BHWU Outreach

- A. A team that includes a Co-Responder and a CORE officer or UPB/CIT officer may engage with members of the public for the purpose of follow-up and Outreach. Per the OPD Policies and Procedures Manual [Appendix "K"](#), "Outreach" assignments are a Priority 6.
1. The individuals selected for Outreach will have been screened by OPD Co-Responders, who, based on their training, knowledge, and experience, determine that the individual is not in an active mental/behavioral health-related crisis.

**NOTE:** The screening may be initiated by any employee of the BHWU.
  2. The following criteria shall be considered when determining the need for an Outreach response:
    - a. Has the individual been in contact with OPD within the past six (6) months?
    - b. Is the person connected to services in the community?
    - c. Is there a concerning mental/behavioral health history of the person?
    - d. Are two (2) officers needed for safety purposes? If so, utilize UPB to assist.
    - e. Does the person have a propensity for violence (danger to self or others)?

#### **IV. BHWU Walk-In Requests for Assistance**

- A. When a person who is seeking mental/behavioral health-related assistance enters one of OPD's five (5) precincts or Central Headquarters, Co-Responders or Mobile Crisis Response shall respond whenever possible.
  - 1. A sworn officer will initially engage with the person and determine if a Co-Responder or Mobile Crisis Response is needed.
  - 2. Every situation is unique therefore a Frisk of the individual seeking assistance shall be completed by officers when criteria per the OPD "[Searches – Persons](#)" policy are met.
  - 3. Once the Co-Responder and officer determine the situation is safe the Co-Responder and/or Mobile Crisis Responder shall proceed to aid the person with assistance/resources and the officer may return to service.

#### **REFERENCES:**

##### **I. Previous OPD Orders**

- A. Previous General Order: #67-22.

##### **II. Accreditation Standards**

- A. CALEA Accreditation standard 41.2.7 is relevant to this policy.