

Press



Release

11 New Hempstead Road, New City, NY (845) 638-5100 Fax: (845) 638-5675 Email: legclerk@co.rockland.ny.us.

For Immediate Release

Contact: **Hon. Philip Soskin**
Laura Incalcaterra, Communications Director

(845) 638-5753
(845) 638-5184

Legislator Soskin Praises Success Of County's New Behavioral Health Response Team

Collaborative Helps People Experiencing Mental Health Crisis

Results Show Many Helped; Need For Emergency Room Visits Avoided

New City, NY (Sept. 2, 2016) – Rockland's new Behavioral Response Team has connected scores of residents with the help they need while also preventing unnecessary trips to the emergency room, according to a team presentation to members of the County Legislature.

At the invitation of Legislator Phil Soskin (D-Monsey), team members were asked to provide an update on the efforts of the Behavioral Response Team during Tuesday's Multi-Services Committee.

The statistics were impressive: Since it launched in April 2015, the team has had 3,114 contacts, including 1,229 actual outreaches or visits. But only 394 of the outreaches resulted in visits to the Emergency Department.

"The numbers are impressive, but even more impressive are the people behind the statistics – the people who have received the help they need thanks to this new team," Soskin said. "This program is proving to be a great asset for all of us in Rockland County."

The Behavioral Health Response Team specializes in providing services to individuals who are experiencing a mental health emergency and who need, but may be unable, to obtain immediate mental health intervention. It provides free 24-hour outreach and support for emotional distress or trauma, anxiety or depression, crisis intervention, suicidal thoughts, alcohol or drug abuse, and serious mental illness.

Run by Rockland Paramedic Services, the BHRT is a highly-trained mobile behavioral health services and crisis management unit. It assists local residents, first responders and agencies in providing on-scene evaluation, treatment and crisis intervention in the community.

The BHRT works collaboratively with both the emergency department and the Behavioral Health Center at Nyack Hospital, outpatient behavioral health providers, and local police and emergency medical services in Rockland County.

Updating the legislators were Raymond Florida, executive director of the non-profit Rockland Paramedic Services; Michael E. Murphy, chief of operations for Rockland Paramedic Services and a team clinician; Nancy C. Magliocca, director of the Behavioral Health Center at Nyack Hospital, which receives patients that need help; and Marion Breland, chair of the Rockland Commission on Mental Health and director of Haverstraw Village's Youth & Family Services, including the Haverstraw Center.

According to Florida, no other behavioral crisis intervention program is run by an EMS agency in the nation, making Rockland County's a unique unit.

Services include supportive telephone counseling; outreach to the home or the workplace; the development of strategies to help a person reduce reoccurring crisis, address alcohol and drug abuse, and cope with past traumatic experiences; help with family support and peer groups; and connecting individuals with additional support services. The BHRT's annual budget of \$856,000 comes via a state grant, allowing for services to be provided to consumers at no charge.

Prior to the creation of the team, a person either had no one to call or they would call 911, which resulted in a police response and trips to the emergency room, Murphy said. This could tie up first responder resources unnecessarily and also send people to the emergency room even when it wasn't appropriate.

Team members wear street clothes, not uniforms, and arrive in plain cars, not emergency vehicles, to help de-escalate a situation, Murphy said. They provide the person with a safety plan, encourage them and refer them to various behavioral health services in the community. The team follows up with the person to check on their well-being and to make sure they connected with the appropriate behavioral health resource.

"What we've been able to do is enhance the behavioral health care that's given to the community," Murphy said. "We've been able to deal with crisis. We've been able to reduce calls to 911, because they call us now instead, and we've also been able to reduce the unnecessary visits to the emergency department, which is really not where the patient should be at this particular time."

People in a mental health crisis – or their family, friends, co-workers, etc. – can still 911, or they can opt to call the BHRT directly at: 845-517-0400. Visit the BHRT online at www.RocklandHelp.org and listen to its radio program, Healthy Attitudes, at 9 a.m. the first Thursday of the month on WRCR AM 1700.

#

Visit us: <http://www.rocklandgov.com/>
Like us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/rockleg>