



News Release

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Multi-Agency Co-Responder Training Complete

Five-Member Team Ready to Respond to Calls

ROCKFORD – The Co-Responder Pilot Program for Rockford and Winnebago Counties has completed a weeklong session of training in preparation to respond to call involving a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

In addition to hearing from law enforcement and panel discussions, the cohort group completed training sessions on topics including:

- Substance Use Disorder – warning signs and overdose potential
- Strength-based communications and stigma
- Do's and don'ts of crisis intervention
- Disabilities, police protocols, and resources needed
- Mental Health First Aid (with certification)
- Case management and linkage to services
- Verbal de-escalation
- Suicide warning signs and intervention
- Teambuilding

The team members also participated in mentorship discussions with other agencies who operate similar programs.

“The training provided by Rosecrance has positioned the cohort team to better serve the residents of our community through this program,” says Rockford Police Chief Dan O’Shea.

During the three-month pilot, unit members will respond and provide follow-up and connection to community resources. The three agencies will share the cost of the pilot through their existing budgets.

“As the work begins for this pilot program, we look forward to the measuring the effectiveness of the program so we can adjust as necessary and plan for long-term solutions,” said Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara.

With mental health concerns continuing to grow during the pandemic, the pilot program is well timed. “We see greater need each day for our resources at Rosecrance,” said Dave Gomel, president of Rosecrance Health Network. “Reaching people in crisis with this co-responder team will provide timely, appropriate resources to help connect them with the care they need, when they need it.”

The team is now ready to respond to crisis calls. “After months of discussion and planning, we are ready to advance this new program and determine how to better serve our region,” said Gary Caruana, Winnebago County Sheriff.

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