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Immediate Release

Report Released on Statewide Efforts to Improve Law Enforcement Responses to People with Mental Illnesses

New York—The [Council of State Governments \(CSG\) Justice Center](#) released a new report today that highlights statewide initiatives for supporting local-level specialized policing responses (SPRs) for people with mental illnesses. SPRs are designed to help individuals in crisis connect to community-based treatment and supports, when appropriate, instead of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Statewide Law Enforcement/Mental Health Efforts: Strategies to Support and Sustain Local Initiatives is the result of a project supported by the [Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice](#). It examines how individual states have developed structures and standards to make police encounters with people with mental illnesses safer for all involved and to produce better mental health and criminal justice system outcomes.

“This report is a much-needed resource for anyone interested in seeing consistently high-quality law enforcement/mental health programs created, enhanced, and sustained across entire states,” said Denise O’Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance. “It complements the strong technical assistance and many published tools that BJA’s [Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program](#) has produced to date.”

Statewide Law Enforcement/Mental Health Efforts focuses on Connecticut, Ohio, and Utah, which represent three differently structured initiatives with extensive experience with SPRs. It also includes program examples from other states with established initiatives, such as Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Maine.

“This report reflects the reality that to significantly increase the number and quality of SPR programs in the nation some states may need to shift from a one-jurisdiction-at-a-time approach to a more structured and coordinated statewide effort,” said Mike Lawlor, Connecticut Under Secretary for Criminal Justice Policy and Planning and Justice Center board member. “The report recognizes that states are able to successfully incubate and support collaborative mental health/law enforcement responses that align with evidence-based practices and can be tailored to distinct jurisdictional needs.”

The report is intended to offer a starting point for policymakers, practitioners, and others interested in planning or enhancing a statewide initiative. Among the issues addressed in the report are

- leadership (the strengths and weaknesses of advocacy-, law enforcement- or mental health-led efforts);
- staffing (the use of full-time, part-time, and in-kind personnel resources);
- partnerships (family, consumer, university and cross-disciplinary linkages);
- agency recruitment (regionalized or centralized network models created to unite active SPR jurisdictions and to encourage the creation of new programs);
- fidelity to the core elements of evidence-based mental health/law enforcement responses (oversight that results in effective collaborations, consistent training on essential topics across jurisdictions, and clearly articulated policies for crisis intervention or co-response teams); and
- sustainability (expertise-sharing, staff turnover planning, government official engagement, and evaluations).

Statewide Law Enforcement/Mental Health Efforts: Strategies to Support and Sustain Local Initiatives is available as a free download at www.csgjusticecenter.org/law-enforcement/projects/statewide-le-mh. It is one in a series of BJA-supported reports that addresses law enforcement and mental health issues, including [Essential Elements of a Specialized Law Enforcement-Based Program](#), [Strategies for Effective Law Enforcement Training](#) and [Tailoring Law Enforcement Initiatives to Individual Jurisdictions](#). Additional resources can be found at http://www.consensusproject.org/issue_areas/law-enforcement.