



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG
Mayor

MICHAEL S. HARRISON
Police Commissioner

September 21, 2019

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: City Council Bill #20-0239R
Informational Hearing – Responding to Mental Health Crises

Dear Council President Scott and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 20-0239R. This legislation is for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore city Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

The Baltimore Police Department supports this resolution and looks forward to presenting how the Department has been working with Behavioral Health System Baltimore to satisfy the Consent Decree requirements related to this topic. For your information, we have included a brief synopsis of our efforts to date:

Baltimore City Consent Decree

The [Baltimore City Consent Decree](#) includes nearly 30 paragraphs of specific reforms aimed at identifying gaps in the city's behavioral health crisis response system, revising the BPD's policies related to interactions with individuals experiencing behavioral health disabilities or crisis, and enhancing all levels of crisis response training for BPD members. The Decree envisions the least police-involved response to crisis events consistent with public safety, favoring new strategies at the 911/Dispatch and on-scene, patrol level that divert calls towards community resources away from law enforcement. The Decree also prescribes that the BPD participate in a city-wide collaborative body, known as the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee (CPIC), to effectuate the required reforms in policy, training, data collection, and implementing the recommendations of the Gaps Analysis report.

Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee

The Mayor's Office, BPD, and BHSB work closely with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and members of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team to address the behavioral health requirements in the City's 2017 Consent Decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. This includes co-chairing the [Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee \(CPIC\)](#) and its four sub-committees.

Key Milestones:

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| Jul 2019 | DOJ and Court-Appointed Monitoring Team approve the following BPD Polices: 712 , Crisis Intervention Program 713 , Petition for Emergency Evaluation & Voluntary Admission 715 , Behavioral Health Crisis Dispatch |
| Nov 2019 | BHSB & Disability Rights Maryland host Decriminalizing Disabilities Symposium to get community input into CPIC priorities |
| Dec 2019 | BPD release the Baltimore Public Behavioral Health System Gaps Analysis Report |
| May 2020 | BPD implements Behavioral Health Awareness Training Curriculum: 911 & Dispatch for all new officers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioral Health Awareness – 24 hours, police academy trainees• Behavioral Health Awareness – 8 hours, veterans (began September 2020)• Behavioral Health Awareness – 8 hours, police dispatchers and 911 operators (will ideally begin October 2020)• Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) – 40 hours, veteran patrol officers (will begin Q1 2021)• Crisis Response – 1 hour, veterans (e-learning) |
| Jul 2020 | BHSB submit Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System Regional Partnership proposal to HSCRC for an estimated \$45 million over 5 years for behavioral health crisis services BHSB and DOJ host a Town Hall on Behavioral Health, Police Reform and the Consent Decree |

Gaps Analysis Report

The <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/baltimore-public-health-system-gap-analysis> report was approved by the Department of Justice and submitted to the federal court in December 2019. It analyzes existing public behavioral health service systems to identify unmet needs, service gaps, barriers to accessing care, opportunities for better collaboration, and other recommended system improvements, particularly as they pertain to decreasing or improving interactions with police.

Implementation Priorities:

1. Behavioral Health Crisis Services
2. Affordable Housing
3. 911 Dispatch/Diversion
4. Expanding Peer Recovery Support Workforce

The Baltimore Police Department fully supports this resolution and looks forward to a robust discussion at the hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary
Matt Stegmand, Mayor's Legislative Liaison
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff

c/o 242 West 29th Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2908

Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff