

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$2 MILLION IN MENTAL HEALTH FIELD RESPONSE GRANTS AWARDED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

(Lacey, WA) --- Nine Washington communities will receive grants to expand mental health field response capabilities for local law enforcement. The funds were awarded by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) as a part of a \$2 million program established by the Washington State Legislature. A total of nine grants were awarded to law enforcement agencies in both western and eastern Washington.

The funds will help local law enforcement agencies establish and expand mental health field response capabilities, by utilizing mental health professionals to professionally, humanely, and safely respond to encounters involving persons with mental health issues.

The grants will be distributed to the following agencies who submitted proposals for funding:

- Kirkland, Shoreline, Bothell, Lake Forest Park and Kenmore Police Departments -- Joint Proposal
- Kitsap County Sheriff's Office
- Olympia Police Department
- Pierce County Sheriff's Office
- Port Angeles Police Department
- Redmond Police Department
- Spokane County Sheriff's Office and Spokane Police Department-- Joint Proposal
- Vancouver Police Department
- Wenatchee & East Wenatchee Police Departments and Chelan & Douglas County Sheriff's Offices -- Joint Proposal

Mental health is the number one public safety issue facing Washington. People experiencing mental health crises are not necessarily committing crimes, but communities continue to rely on law enforcement to respond to those crises. These grant funds will help local law enforcement agencies focus on sending help where help is needed. Mental health professionals will be working in the field alongside law enforcement. This improves the interactions between the public and law enforcement, thereby reducing the possibility of using force, and improves public safety overall. Instead of booking someone into jail, they may be connected with services or diverted to a more appropriate facility.

Grant recipients must include at least one mental health professional who will perform services. Mental health professionals may assist patrol officers in the field or in an on-call capacity, provide training on best practices, or provide other services. Grant recipients are encouraged to coordinate with local public safety answering points to maximize the goals of the program.

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WASPC was founded in 1963 and represents executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes the 39 elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of several federal agencies.