



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Police Response to Persons in Crisis Including Those Who Appear to Have a Mental Illness or Neurodevelopmental Disability, January 1 – December 31, 2023

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

Report Date: 2024-06-18

Recommendation (s)

That the Niagara Police Service Board (Board) receives this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS) is in compliance with By-Law 456-2024, Police Response to Persons in Crisis Including Those Who Appear to Have a Mental Illness or Neurodevelopmental Disability.
- The Chief is required to make a written annual report to the Board with respect to this By-Law.
- This report will provide a summary of requirements to ensure the Service is compliant with the By-Law.

Financial Consideration

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendation contained within this report.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 456-2024, Police Response to Persons in Crisis Including Those Who Appear to Have a Mental Illness or Neurodevelopmental Disability, the Chief of Police shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year, in respect of police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability. The report shall include:

- a) a summary of the written procedures concerning police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability;

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- b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures;
 - c) a summary of the training given to Members with respect to police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability;
 - d) a summary of issues raised and/or discussed with community partners relating to police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability.

This Board Report will outline each of the above and confirm compliance with the By-Law.

- a) *“...a summary of the written procedures concerning police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability...”*

General Order 167.08, titled Mentally Ill Persons, outlines police responsibilities, administrative requirements, and practical procedures, when responding to persons in crisis including those who appear to have a mental illness or neurodevelopmental disability. This General Order is reviewed bi-annually and is set for review in 2025.

- b) *“...the status of Service compliance with the said procedures...”*

The NRPS continues to collaborate with community members and agencies, health care providers, government agencies, municipal officials, other criminal justice agencies, and the local crown attorney to ensure service delivery relating to persons in crisis including those who appear to have a mental illness or neurodevelopmental disability remains compliant.

Examples of Partnerships:

The St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System (NHS) has the only Schedule 1 Psychiatric Facility in the Niagara Region. Officers utilize the Health IM Brief Mental Health Screener (BMHS) system to complete a BMHS form from the vehicle Mobile Data Terminal. This form is electronically submitted to the hospital prior to arrival, and it is automatically attached to the Versadex report. Changes such as these, as well as the development of the Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT) program, have resulted in greater efficiencies for patient admittance and decreased wait times for officers at the hospital.

The MCRRT program has been operational in St. Catharines since July 2015 and expanded into Niagara Falls in 2021. In April 2022, provincial funding through a grant was secured, which supported an MCRRT expansion into Welland. The Welland MCRRT pilot concluded in April 2023.

Each MCRRT team consists of a Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) worker and a Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) Officer. The team responds to calls as first responders in St. Catharines, Thorold, Niagara Falls and Niagara on the Lake, primarily

servicing individuals in crisis presenting symptoms of mental illness, behavioral disorders, or substance-use problems. MCRRT is available seven days a week between 12:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m.

The primary objectives of MCRRT include the following:

- Decrease wait times for individuals in crisis to connect with a mental health worker;
- Decrease the number of Mental Health Act apprehensions, divert from hospital;
- Increase community connections to service for individuals in crisis; and
- Develop police capacity to respond to mental health calls.

In November 2023, the Service again partnered with CMHA to embark on a new pilot response model for persons experiencing crisis. The Civilian Crisis Response Team (CCRT) covering Welland, Pelham and Port Colborne is funded through grant monies received from the Minister of the Solicitor General. Different from the MCRRT model, the CCRT model has a team of CMHA mental health workers responding to a set criterion of calls for service, once assessed for suitability by uniform officers. The goal of this pilot program is consistent with that of the MCRRT program, connecting community members in need to resources and provide support to police responding to mental health calls for service.

The following table provides an overview of the number of calls attended by MCRRT / CCRT units in each full year since the inception of the unit and includes both the number and percentage of calls that did not result in apprehension under the Mental Health Act.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
MCRRT Calls for Service (includes Welland statistics)	927	750	1431	1883	1374
Non-Apprehensions	623	460	1009	1463	1207
% Diverted from hospital	67.2	61.3	70.5	77.6	87.8

	2023
CCRT Calls for Service (November 25, 2023 – December 31, 2023)	22
Non-Apprehensions	21
% Diverted from Hospital	95%

The Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) program is a collaboration between NRPS, CMHA, Niagara Health System, and the Distress Centre. Like the MCRRT program, each COAST team consists of a CMHA worker and a CIT officer. COAST teams cover the Region and are available seven days a week, Monday to Saturday from 10:00am to 10:00pm, and Sundays 12:00pm to 8:00 p.m.

The team follows up with persons reported as being in crisis who are not in immediate need of an intervention or who are considered a vulnerable person including persons who have mental illness, suffer from a developmental disability, Alzheimer's, or Dementia. Services provided include crisis assessment, intervention, providing information, support, and referrals to other agencies for those in need or their families. When available, they provide rapid response to persons in crisis primarily in the areas not covered by MCRRT.

COAST calls are generated by both the CMHA and the NRPS. Any NRPS Officer can request a COAST review for any type of incident by submitting a COAST referral form through the Versadex computer-reporting system. COAST receives the requests by way of the workflow management feature. COAST reviews are mandatory for all persons in crisis type incidents. Additional referrals are generated by the Quality Assurance Unit who reviews all reports for content and completeness. Other call types that are often sent for review by COAST include welfare checks, unwanted persons, neighbour disputes, and assist ambulance calls.

The COAST Unit received 439 Police referrals in 2023, and Mobile Outreach conducted approximately 298 visits in 2023. Mobile Outreach is staffed with 2 Mental Health Workers or a Mental Health Worker and Officer depending on the situation presented. During these outreaches, the COAST team assesses and connects the community member with the community resources best suited to achieve positive outcomes for the individual while maintaining the safety of all those involved.

The Service and CMHA continue to research innovative ways to enhance the COAST Unit and ensure that the resources of the unit are used to its maximum potential.

- c. *"...A summary of the training given to Members with respect to police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability..."*

CIT training was designed by the St. Joseph's Healthcare facility in Hamilton to assist police with their response to persons who are emotionally disturbed or who have a mental illness or a developmental disability. Locally, CMHA provides CIT training to NRPS members. The one-week course includes presentations from community mental health agencies, medical personnel, family advocates, and clients of mental health services within the Niagara Region.

CIT training is required for all sworn officers and offered to civilian members.

There were 3 CIT training courses held in 2023, adding a total of 52 new people trained. As of December 31, 2023, there were 478 sworn members trained in CIT, with an additional 104 civilian members.

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- d. *“...A summary of issues raised and/or discussed with community partners relating to police response to persons who are in crisis, including those persons appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability...”*

Historically, wait times at hospitals was an issue for NRPS front line operations. Through continued collaboration, the Service has seen a reduction in wait times. The Service remains committed to working with community stakeholders to find solutions to continue to lower these wait times.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not Applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with the Adequacy and Effective Policing.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Police Services Board By-Law 456-2024, Police Response to Persons in Crisis Including Those Who Appear to Have a Mental Illness or Neurodevelopmental Disability
NRPS General Order 167.08 - Mentally Ill Persons.

Other Pertinent Reports

8.10 - 2023.07.27 – Annual Report - Police Response to Persons Who Are Emotionally Disturbed or have a Mental Illness or Developmental Disability.

This report was prepared by Michael Matwijow, Acting Sergeant, 1 District Administration in consultation with Robert LaPlante, Inspector, 1 District Commander, and reviewed by Dave Gomez, Acting Superintendent, District Operations. Recommended by David Masotti, Acting Deputy Chief, Operational Services.

T. WASELOVICH

Submitted by:

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Appendices

Not Applicable.