



RILEY COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

To reduce crime and improve the quality of life for the citizens we serve

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MEDIA RELEASE

◆Mental Health Co-Responder Announcement◆

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MANHATTAN, KAN. –

The Riley County Police Department, in conjunction with Pawnee Mental Health Services, is proud to announce the creation of the mental health co-responder position. The co-responder works for Pawnee, but is assigned full-time with RCPD to provide help with crises services.

Jessica Blasi has been tapped for the position, and sees the role as an opportunity to help those most in need. “The goal is to reduce the rate of arrests for those dealing with mental health challenges,” Jessica said. Jessica said she will conduct follow up with clients in order to provide them with more consistent care, as well as connect them to outside resources. She will assist with mental health assessments when needed, and provide information about mental health resources in the community to individuals with hurdles to good mental health. One of Jessica’s goals is to reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues and help people realize that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Jessica will also provide more in-depth mental health training to officers, helping them be better equipped to deal with those in crisis. Additionally, Jessica will be on call to provide assistance when officers deal with those in crisis.

Captain Kyle, commander of the patrol division at RCPD is excited about the possibilities. “This program gives us a lot of confidence in our decision making in the field.”

According to Director Schoen, the position helps restore what has been lost in recent years. “We’re confident it will help us address shortcomings in local mental health care which have resulted from cuts to community mental health centers over the past several years.”

Dr. Jeremy Boyle, the Crisis Services Director at Pawnee Mental Health Services, believes the program will be beneficial to the community. “My highest hope for this program is that the crisis responder can help individuals who are dealing with mental health and substance use disorder engage in the treatment they need before it leads to behavior that may cause them to end up in legal trouble.”

We are excited to see positive results stemming for the partnership between Riley County Police Department and Pawnee Mental Health Services.

