

KENT COUNTY

CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

building relationships, reducing the stigma of mental illness and helping people through education and training

For Immediate Release
May 4, 2017

Contact: Mary Ann Sabo
Sabo PR, 616.485.1432
or
Brian Greenleaf
Sabo PR, 906.221.9174

Kent County Healthcare, Public Safety & Emergency Response Professionals Announce New County-Wide Initiative *Lt. Gov. Brian Calley Addresses May 4 Public Meeting, Presents \$1.2 Million Grant to Network180*

Grand Rapids, MI – This morning, Lt. Gov. Brian Calley joined healthcare, behavioral health, public safety and emergency responses professionals from 24 organizations and municipalities to announce a new Kent County initiative focused on providing better – and more coordinated – responses for adults struggling with mental health issues.

Representatives from the Kent County Chiefs of Police Association, Network180, Mercy Health Saint Mary's and others unveiled the Kent County Crisis Intervention Team, or KCCIT, during this morning's Grand Valley Metro Council meeting. Chairing the State of Michigan's Jail Diversion Council, Calley shared his support for the initiative, which is being introduced during Mental Health Awareness Month.

Calley also presented a \$1.2 million grant to Network180, which is the community mental health authority for Kent County. The grant will be used to renovate current Network180 facilities into a 24/7 crisis center that will provide immediate psychiatric care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis rather than sending them to the emergency room or to jail. The crisis center will offer a walk-in area for crisis intervention, a secure 24-hour crisis stabilization unit and a small-scale crisis residential unit to assist with client placement post-discharge.

"Network180 has been a great partner in our efforts to divert Michiganders who need mental health assistance toward treatment instead of incarceration," Calley said. "This new crisis center creates another opportunity for people to get the help they need in order to be productive and independent in their lives. By working together, partners in West Michigan are giving local residents the chance for positive outcomes during difficult situations."

More than three years in the making, this collaboration of law enforcement, acute care facilities, psychiatric care facilities and community mental health providers is designed to provide better care for adults with mental illness by reducing misdirection, conserving resources and addressing critical needs. Specifically, it will:

- Provide officers with 40 hours of comprehensive crisis intervention training so they are better equipped to deal with individuals with mental illness

- Provide dispatchers and corrections officers with eight hours of crisis intervention training
- Ensure a system of services that is friendly to individuals with mental illness by providing a forum for area organizations and agencies to collaborate
- Improve mental health pre-arrest diversion systems that are more efficient, effective and responsive to all mental health system participants

The \$50,000 training program, which will begin providing training to law enforcement agencies this month, is being paid through grants from Network180, Metro Health Hospital Foundation and the Kent County Chiefs of Police Association.

“Officers who respond to 911 calls for help in dealing with someone grappling with mental illness have limited tools and responses options,” said Mark Herald, director of East Grand Rapids Public Safety. “They can send someone to jail or to the emergency room – and all too often, neither is the best response.

“I applaud all the organizations who have come together to establish KCCIT. This initiative is a chance to fix a system that has been broken for decades. It will provide much-needed training for our officers so that they are better equipped to de-escalate tense situations when they are called to intervene.

“At a national level, we have seen positive outcomes in communities that use what has come to be known as the Memphis Model: a reduction in the use of force, fewer arrests, fewer officer injuries and fewer injuries to the person in crisis. Families have less frustration and fear of law enforcement involvement – and the person with the mental health issues is treated as a person needing care, not a problem.”

Kent County is the fourth government entity in Michigan to establish a crisis intervention program. Conversations began in 2014 when Rafael X. Diaz, a lieutenant with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, was consulted to explore a possible crisis intervention program. Diaz worked with the steering committee and stakeholders to address identified service gaps, including:

- Lack of a secure crisis center for adults that provides mental health screening and evaluation services on a 24-hour basis
- Statewide shortage of bed space for those needing to be stabilized in a psychiatric care facility, which puts patient care in jeopardy

“KCCIT has laid the foundation for establishing a county-wide initiative,” said Diaz, who will lead the crisis intervention training sessions later in May. “I have watched as various agencies and organizations have come together to tear down silos and work collaboratively to solve the County’s problems.

“The training for law enforcement, dispatchers and corrections personnel will take Kent County to the forefront of promoting peaceful resolutions to dynamic crisis events.”

Network180 estimates that one in 25 individuals live with a serious mental illness in Kent County. In 2016, there were more than 12,000 hospital emergency room admissions where the main reason was a behavioral health crisis. The Kent County Jail saw 1,176 bookings of individuals with a serious mental illness during that same time.

When completed in October of 2018, Network180’s crisis center will be able to provide immediate psychiatric treatment, with the most common discharge plan being back to the individual’s home. The organization will continue to partner with both healthcare and law enforcement to allow for efficient and effective transfers of individuals in crisis from the community to the crisis center.

“Crisis centers throughout the United States significantly reduce the number of individuals in crisis who are admitted to a psychiatric inpatient facility, emergency department or jails,” said Scott Gilman, executive director of Network180. “With few alternatives available for a behavioral health crisis, most individuals in crisis must be transported to an emergency department or the county jail. Placement in

these settings not only delay behavioral health treatment but also frequently traumatizes the individual and escalates the crisis.

“We believes the development of the crisis center will better serve our community members in a behavioral health crisis.”

Absent a secure facility and trained staff, the mentally ill often wind up at one of the area’s acute-care hospitals or the jail after a confrontation with family, friends or co-workers – creating a burden on the facilities, which lack the resources to manage the mentally ill population.

The agencies participating from Kent County include:

- East Grand Rapids Department of Public Safety
- Forest View Hospital
- Gerald R. Ford International Airport Police
- Grand Rapids Community College Police Department
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Grandville Police Department
- Kent County Chiefs of Police Association
- Kent County Probate Court
- Kent County Prosecutor’s Office
- Kent County Sheriff’s Department
- Kentwood Police Department
- Lowell Police Department
- Metro Health – University of Michigan Health
- Michigan State Police
- Network180
- Pine Rest Mental Health Services
- Rockford Department of Public Safety
- Sparta Police Department
- Spectrum Health
- Mercy Health Saint Mary’s
- Walker Police Department
- Wedgewood Christian Services
- Wyoming Department of Public Safety

###