

Co-Responder Program History

Meridian's Co-Responder program was established in 2018, in partnership with the Gainesville Police Department (GPD), to provide community-based solutions for citizens living with mental illness or substance use disorders, who often find themselves involved with the justice system.

The Co-Responder program was expanded into the Alachua County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) in June 2020.

This evidence-based approach provides a positive form of outreach, community education, and crisis de-escalation. The model also leads to fewer arrests and repeat encounters with law enforcement, as well as reduced use of force in encounters with people experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis.



**Wellness is
within everyone's reach.**

Co-Responder Team's Mission:

To create a successful diversion from state hospitals, state prisons, and county jails, and connect clients to mental health and/or substance use disorder services throughout the community.



The Co-Responder Teams are sponsored by Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, the City of Gainesville, The Alachua County Sheriff's Office, LSF Health Systems LLC, and the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.



Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.

mbhci.org

Local: (352) 374-5600

Toll Free: (800) 330-5615



Note: Because of the increased health risks, we prioritize admitting pregnant females and persons who are using drugs intravenously (by injection) to substance use treatment. If you, or the person that you are concerned about, are in one of these priority populations, please let us know when you call for help.



Co-Responder Teams

About Co-Responder Teams

Co-Responder Teams consist of two full-time employees, a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) police officer and a masters-level mental health clinician.

The officer and clinician partner together on a 40-hour shift and will ride in a marked police vehicle to respond to calls for service involving persons experiencing crises related to mental illness, substance use disorders, and emotionally charged situations.



Who We Serve

- People who are actively suicidal and/or having suicidal thoughts
- People under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- People displaying symptoms of mental illness
 - Bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia, trauma disorders, anxiety, etc.
- People affected by developmental and cognitive impairments
 - Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's Disease, Autism, etc.

What We Do

- **Respond** to assist individuals in the community who have mental health and substance use disorder concerns during their point of crisis.
- **Act** as a liaison or mediator between first responders and individuals in crisis to provide the best possible care and mental health treatment for the individuals' needs.
- **Provide** alternate care in the least restrictive environment through coordination with community mental health and substance use disorder resources.

Our Goals

- **Prevent** unnecessary incarceration and/or hospitalization of mentally ill individuals.
- **Provide** community support and follow-up for individuals with mental health issues and substance use disorders during a mental health crisis.
- **Prevent** duplication of mental health services.
- **Facilitate** the return of law enforcement to their normal duties.



What Sets Us Apart

- We provide support and education for individuals and families affected by mental illness who have had a law enforcement interaction.
- We improve care coordination by providing referrals to local resources, identifying gaps in treatment, and acting as a buffer between law enforcement officer response and caseworker response.
- We conduct follow-up visits/calls from the Co-Responder Team who assisted the individual at their point of crisis.



Evidence-Based Practices

The teams utilize time within their shift to address issues at the Intercept 0 point in the **Sequential Intercept Model (SIM)**. Intercept 0 on the SIM focuses on designing mental health/law enforcement systems to connect individuals in need with treatment *before* a behavioral health crisis begins, at the earliest stage possible.