



For Immediate Release

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Miami County Community Partners Announce New Initiative to Strengthen Access to Mental Health Care

A team of stakeholders across multiple systems, including public health, mental health, law enforcement, jail, emergency medical services, district court, community corrections, social services and academic partners have come together to establish the Miami County Mental Health Initiative. The Initiative is a collaborative approach to promote community wellness. Its primary goals are to: provide training and tools to first responders and other community partners; evaluate current resources in the area; and to enhance the community response for individuals with mental health conditions. As described by Christena Beer, Miami County's Health Department Director: "The health of our families and communities, and the well-being of our community partners depends greatly on our grassroots efforts to address the gaps in response and connections to care. We are working together to craft creative solutions to ultimately meet the rising need for behavioral health care and provide timely support to those who need it the most." Funding for the initiative comes from a grant totaling nearly forty-four thousand dollars from the Behavioral Health Services Commission of the state's Department of Aging and Disability Services, awarded to Miami County Health Department, in collaboration with the Sheriff. Allocations totaling \$1.5 million in state general funds were disbursed to fifteen community organizations across the state to help strengthen and expand suicide prevention efforts.

This group of partners will create a strategic plan that aims to increase and enhance a full continuum of behavioral health, substance use and suicide prevention services and connections to community resources. However, their initial primary focus will be on evaluating the needs of first responders and individuals involved in the criminal justice system. "We know that incarcerated individuals with mental illness are at increased risk of physical illness and death. Our focus over the last several weeks has been to evaluate the current processes and policies in

place and to collectively make recommendations on changes to implement that will enhance the capacity to meet the needs of those involved in the criminal justice system.” said Miami County Attorney, Colin Reynolds.

According to Miami County Undersheriff, Matthew Kelly, one of the Initiative’s first accomplishments has been the successful implementation of the Miami County Sheriff’s Premise Alert Program. Through the Premise Alert Program, residents of Miami County can voluntarily submit information which will notify local first responders if they, or a family member, require special assistance or treatment during an at-home emergency. Undersheriff Kelly is optimistic: “This is a great program for individuals diagnosed with a medical condition such as Autism, Alzheimer’s Disease, a mental health condition and for anyone with visual or physical impairments to opt into. The Premise Alert Program provides residents an opportunity to submit important information to be documented within the dispatch system to be used by first responders. Knowing this important information ahead of time can support a more informed decision-making approach for the responding agency.” When Dispatch receives a request to respond to the address listed on the form, the information may be communicated to law enforcement and other first responders such as emergency medical services. The registration form will be maintained by the Sheriff’s Records Division and input into the Computer Aided Dispatch system. It will be maintained by the Sheriff for a period of 12 months. After 12 months, Sheriff’s personnel will contact the provider of the information to confirm its accuracy and for consent to keeping the information on file. More information regarding the Premise Alert Program can be found on the Sheriff’s website.

Elizabeth Layton Center, the Community Mental Health Center serving Miami and Franklin counties, was invited to participate in the Mental Health Initiative. The Center recently obtained provisional certification to deliver a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) care model. The model focuses on an integrated, coordinated and evidence-based approach with better pathways for accessing behavioral health services. “The Miami County Mental Health Initiative comes at the perfect time!” said Leslie Bjork, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Layton Center. “Enhancing behavioral health service access through community partnership is a core feature of the CCBHC model of care. I am proud to see our local partners come together to bolster behavioral health support in our community. Together we can create a network of response that truly makes a difference!”

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