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## **Lynchburg Police Department and Horizon Behavioral Health announce plans for Co-Responder Program**

**Lynchburg, VA** – In partnership with Horizon Behavioral Health, the Lynchburg Police Department announces plans for a Co-Responder Program designed to provide effective crisis response, enabling public service providers to offer efficient mental health response and treatment to individuals in crisis. The goal of the Co-Responder Program is to increase timely, on-scene assessment and de-escalation of behavioral health crises.

The Co-Responder Program will partner one Crisis Intervention Trained Police Officer with a Horizon Crisis Intervention Specialist. The pair will respond to behavioral health calls for service throughout the City of Lynchburg. These calls could be linked to mental health issues, substance usage, developmental disabilities, or other related concerns. The teams are to be deployed based on the peak volume of calls for services related to mental health. The co-responder team will respond to calls for service received by the Lynchburg Emergency Communications Center. The Co-Responder Program has been proven as an effective model to assist in diverting community members from arrest and incarceration.

Lynchburg Police Chief, Ryan Zuidema, says “With the support of grant funding approved by Lynchburg City Council, this program will afford us the opportunity and resources to deploy a highly capable team of trained professionals to effectively respond to mental health crisis situations and enhance the safety of all citizens served.”

Melissa Lucy, Horizon CEO, emphasizes, “This collaborative partnership will allow us to leverage shared resources to better serve our community by reducing hospitalizations and increasing access to care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

The Co-Responder Program is slated to begin actively serving the City of Lynchburg in 2024.

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