

RCW 36.28A.440 Mental health field response grant program. (1)

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall develop and implement a mental health field response grant program. The purpose of the program is to assist local law enforcement agencies to establish and expand mental health field response capabilities, utilizing mental health professionals to professionally, humanely, and safely respond to crises involving persons with behavioral health issues with treatment, diversion, and reduced incarceration time as primary goals. A portion of the grant funds may also be used to develop data management capability to support the program.

(2) Grants must be awarded to local law enforcement agencies based on locally developed proposals to incorporate mental health professionals into the agencies' mental health field response planning and response. Two or more agencies may submit a joint grant proposal to develop their mental health field response proposals. Proposals must provide a plan for improving mental health field response and diversion from incarceration through modifying or expanding law enforcement practices in partnership with mental health professionals. A peer review panel appointed by the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs in consultation with managed care organizations and behavioral health administrative services organizations must review the grant applications. Once the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs certifies that the application satisfies the proposal criteria, the grant funds will be distributed. To the extent possible, at least one grant recipient agency should be from the east side of the state and one from the west side of the state with the crest of the Cascades being the dividing line. The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall make every effort to fund at least eight grants per fiscal year with funding provided for this purpose from all allowable sources under this section. The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs may prioritize grant applications that include local matching funds. Grant recipients must be selected and receiving funds no later than October 1, 2018.

(3) Grant recipients must include at least one mental health professional who will perform professional services under the plan. A mental health professional may assist patrolling officers in the field or in an on-call capacity, provide preventive, follow-up, training on mental health field response best practices, or other services at the direction of the local law enforcement agency. Nothing in this subsection (3) limits the mental health professional's participation to field patrol. Grant recipients are encouraged to coordinate with local public safety answering points to maximize the goals of the program.

(4) Within existing resources, the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall:

(a) Consult with the department of social and health services research and data analysis unit to establish data collection and reporting guidelines for grant recipients. The data will be used to study and evaluate whether the use of mental health field response programs improves outcomes of interactions with persons experiencing behavioral health crises, including reducing rates of violence and harm, reduced arrests, and jail or emergency room usage;

(b) Consult with the health care authority, the department of health, and the managed care system to develop requirements for participating mental health professionals; and

(c) Coordinate with public safety answering points, behavioral health, and the department of social and health services to develop and incorporate telephone triage criteria or dispatch protocols to assist with mental health, law enforcement, and emergency medical responses involving mental health situations.

(5) The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall submit an annual report to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature on the program. The report must include information on grant recipients, use of funds, participation of mental health professionals, and feedback from the grant recipients by December 1st of each year the program is funded.

(6) Grant recipients shall develop and provide or arrange for training necessary for mental health professionals to operate successfully and competently in partnership with law enforcement agencies. The training must provide the professionals with a working knowledge of law enforcement procedures and tools sufficient to provide for the safety of the professionals, partnered law enforcement officers, and members of the public.

(7) Nothing in this section prohibits the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs from soliciting or accepting private funds to support the program created in this section. [2019 c 325 s 5008; 2018 c 142 s 1.]

Effective date—2019 c 325: See note following RCW 71.24.011.