



County of San Diego

Update on Mobile Crisis Response Team Program

March 30, 2022

BACKGROUND

Each year law enforcement receives tens of thousands of mental health related calls. While all calls require a timely response, many do not necessitate law enforcement intervention. In many instances, deployment of behavioral health professionals would have been a more person-centered approach to respond to non-violent behavioral health situations. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken several actions to enhance crisis response efforts, as follows:

- On June 25, 2019 (1), the Board approved a recommendation to enhance the crisis intervention options available to the community by establishing a non-law enforcement Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT) pilot program, in coordination with County of San Diego (County), Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS), the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, and the San Diego County District Attorney, with initial efforts focused in the North Coastal Region.
- On June 23, 2020 (26), the Board further expanded MCRT by approving an expedited rollout of MCRTs countywide.
- Subsequent to the January 2021 MCRT pilot rollout in North Coastal Region, the Board further affirmed their commitment to strengthen MCRT services in an action brought forward by on April 6, 2021 (9), which included recommendations to conduct a public awareness campaign, add staff to work with public safety partners, and outreach to key stakeholders for continued engagement.

The information below represents the third update to the Board on overall MCRT program progress; and is responsive to the report back requirements in the April 6, 2021 (9) minute order.

Triage Protocols and Law Enforcement Collaboration

MCRT services are designed to help people who are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis by dispatching behavioral health experts to emergency calls instead of law enforcement, when appropriate, with teams dispatched primarily by calls made to the Access and Crisis Line (888-724-7240) though law enforcement agencies can also refer calls they receive to MCRT. On November 17, 2021, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed with National City Police Department and Chula Vista Police Department and on March 24, 2022, a multi-jurisdictional MOA was executed. BHS and law enforcement partners worked closely to finalize the referral criteria that is now used by emergency services dispatchers to ensure safety and determine when a referral to MCRT is appropriate. This criterion is being utilized by all jurisdictions that are parties to the MOA.

The MOAs between the County and law enforcement jurisdictions include mutual sharing of requested de-identified data wherever deemed practical by the law enforcement agency and allowable under the law. BHS continues to collaborate with various law enforcement entities to advance data sharing that will inform MCRT program planning, design, and effectiveness to be responsive to the needs of the community are met including unserved/underserved populations, and to ensure services to clients are yielding meaningful outcomes. To further support collaboration and data integration, BHS recruited for and filled the position approved by the Board on June 29, 2021 (7) under the newly established BHS Data Science Unit.

MCRT Key Data Points to Date

Since the MCRT program launched in January 2021 through March 7, 2022:

- MCRT has responded to 741 calls referred through the Access and Crisis Line (ACL), including 53 referrals from National City/Chula Vista police departments.
- Of the individuals who received an MCRT service, approximately 60% were able to be helped immediately, in the field, reducing the need for law enforcement services and utilization of more expensive, and acute services.

- The majority of individuals (59%) who received a service were between 26-59 years of age.
- Approximately 20% either refused services or had left the location by the time MCRT arrived. On these occasions, MCRT still provided resources to the individual or family members who may be receptive to services in the future.

Rates of engagement and service provision reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of our county, though generally MCRT has engaged a proportionally higher rate of African Americans (12%) and lower rate of Asian and Pacific Islanders (6%) than is reflected in our County's overall population.

MCRT Success Story

The following message was shared recently from a parent who received MCRT services for their child. Some details have been changed to maintain anonymity:

I wanted to write this letter to express my appreciation for your wonderful program and staff. I called the access and crisis line already having met so many block walls in getting my child help. When your team said they would come, I cried.

From the beginning, they were amazing. They called to let me know they were on their way with an estimated time of arrival and with directions to let my child know they were coming and what to say.

They showed up and my child told me to tell them the crisis was over and to go away. But they came in with gifts and snacks and won my child over right away. From the moment they entered, they were professional, empathetic listeners going as far as to sit on the floor in front of my child in their chair. When they left, my child said, "I like them." Which is rare because in the mind of my child, such service providers are only doing what they do for the money.

MCRT staff followed up a few times and my child was willing to talk which was a huge accomplishment. They reached out to my child's school to help the transition back. It is obvious by their actions that they are knowledgeable about their job and understand kids with special needs. Their non-judgmental and caring attitude was a welcomed blessing and I am thankful for all they did.

MCRT Media Campaign and Community Engagement Efforts

An amendment in the amount of \$600,000 to the Countywide Stigma Reduction and Suicide Prevention Media Campaign contract was executed to begin development of a community awareness campaign. Since the last update in December 2021, the following activities have occurred.

In February 2022, over **80 billboards** were placed countywide, were translated into Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog, and placed into respective communities where these languages are spoken.



Digital banner ads, also known as display ads, began running in English and Spanish on high-trafficked websites in February 2022. Four designs were created to reflect different audiences.

A first-run of **community newspaper ads** began running in February 2022 in the following publications, in the languages referenced.

- El Latino – Spanish
- San Diego Voice and Viewpoint – English
- The Filipino Press - Tagalog

In March 2022, 15- and 30-second **radio ads** began running in English and Spanish on the following stations:

- 103.7 (KSON) – English
- Sunny 98.1 (KXSN) – English
- Z90 (XHTZ) – English
- Magic 92.5 (XHRM) – English
- Que Buena 106.5 (KLNK) – Spanish
- Amor 102.9 (KLKQ) – Spanish
- Radio Latina 104.5 (XLTN) – Spanish

Place-based posters are being planned for launch in May 2022 and will be displayed in multiple languages in approximately 150 locations across San Diego County including convenience stores, grocery stores, laundromats, pharmacies, etc. Posters include QR codes where users can link to the MCRT website for complete program details. Sample images below:



Media images were presented to over 150 people across several stakeholder groups including the Behavioral Health Advisory Board, the Human Relations Commission, the Clubhouse Directors meeting, the Transition Age Youth (TAY) Council, and others, to get their reactions and first impressions. As part of the next phase of the media campaign, MCRT messaging will be refined based on the input and feedback of focus groups and based on data trends identified, to promote further awareness and engagement across unserved and underserved communities.

Community-Based Outreach

In a parallel effort, the County has begun a community-based outreach and engagement effort through a contract with Jewish Family Service's Breaking Down Barriers program. Breaking Down Barriers is a prevention and early intervention program providing outreach and education to reduce stigma around mental illness through trusted community partners.

To support community-based efforts to increase awareness about MCRT availability, the program will engage new outreach workers and work with community organizations to connect to diverse communities across our region and provide information about how to access services when there is a need. It is planned that 1,000 community members will be reached each month through outreach events, presentations, community conversations, flyer dissemination, posters placed in community locations, outreach to local businesses and social marketing. The MCRT flyers used to support this effort can also be found on the MCRT website in English and Spanish, with additional languages to be added; stakeholders are being encouraged to reference as print as needed for their individual outreach efforts.



A **press conference** was held on February 28, 2022, with remarks made by Chair Fletcher, Supervisor Lawson-Remer, Dr. Luke Bergmann, and MCRT program leadership. Updates were provided on the program, referrals to date, the media campaign, engagement efforts, and more. MCRT staff were on hand to share their experiences and client success stories; MCRT wrapped vans were also onsite for photographs. [Click here](#) for press conference highlights.

CONTACT INFO

For questions on this report please contact Dr. Piedad Garcia by phone (858-514-3191) or email (Piedad.Garcia@sdcounty.ca.gov). Additionally, the [MCRT webpage](#) is a helpful resource for general information and frequently asked questions. Community members are encouraged to email questions and feedback to MCRT@sdcounty.ca.gov; this box is monitored regularly and responses to questions are posted to the [FAQ page](#) on a regular basis.

URLs referenced within this document:

- MCRT webpage: www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/BHS_MCRT.html
- MCRT FAQs: www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/BHS_MCRT/BHS_MCRT_FAQs.html