

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### \$650K IN MENTAL HEALTH FIELD RESPONSE GRANTS AWARDED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

(Lacey, WA) --- Seven Washington communities will receive grants to expand mental health field response capabilities for local law enforcement. The funds were awarded by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) as a part of an existing program approved by the Washington Legislature with additional funding provided by the Washington Health Care Authority.

The funds will help local law enforcement agencies establish and expand mental health field response capabilities, by utilizing mental health professionals to professionally, humanely, and safely respond to encounters that involve people with mental health issues.

The grants will be distributed to the following agencies who submitted proposals for funding:

- Des Moines, Algona, Auburn, Black Diamond, Federal Way, Kent, Pacific, Renton, and Tukwila Police Departments -- Joint Proposal
- Jefferson County Sheriff's Office
- Marysville, Arlington, and Lake Stevens Police Departments – Joint Proposal
- Olympia Police Department
- Port Angeles Police Department
- Poulsbo Police Department
- Skagit County Sheriff's Office

Mental health is the number one public safety issue facing Washington. People experiencing mental health crises are not necessarily committing crimes, but communities continue to rely on law enforcement to respond to those crises. These grant funds will help local law enforcement agencies focus on sending help where help is needed. Mental health professionals will be working in the field alongside law enforcement. This improves the interactions between the public and law enforcement, thereby reducing the possibility of using force, and improves public safety overall. Instead of booking someone into jail, they may be connected with services or diverted to a more appropriate facility.

Grant recipients must include at least one mental health professional who will perform services. Mental health professionals may assist patrol officers in the field or in an on-call capacity, provide training on best practices, or provide other services. Grant recipients are encouraged to coordinate with local public safety answering points to maximize the goals of the program.

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*WASPC was founded in 1963 and represents executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes the 39 elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of several federal agencies.*