

MHJU News

Monthly Newsletter of the Houston Police Department's Mental Health Unit November 2009

NPC Expansion

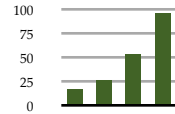
Renovation of the NPC has started expanding from one interview room to three

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C O V E R S T O R Y

Mentally Ill Veteran Missing From Ohio for Six Years Found and Returned to Family

James Johnson, a 43-year-old veteran, was released from a mental health facility in Toledo, Ohio in 2003 with \$138 and a 30-day supply of medication. Johnson got on a bus to Houston and has been a homeless person on our streets since. He is known by other homeless persons as "the karate guy" because he stands in the streets practicing karate moves and flexing his muscles.

In mid-September, Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) Officer Eric Chimney and his Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) clinician partner Mike Erickson picked Johnson up and brought him to the NPC for a psychiatric evaluation. Johnson was in the street practicing his karate moves on moving cars, almost getting hit by several. He was hearing voices in his head yelling at him and "honking their horns."



(Left to right) CIRT Clinician Mike Erickson, James Johnson, and CIRT Officer Eric Chimney.

Three weeks later, a family member from Ohio called the Houston Police Department's Homicide Division asking if the department had any information on James. The family thought he was dead since they had not heard from James for six years.

Lieutenant Harris in homicide checked on Johnson and found the report made by Officer Chimney three weeks earlier. Lt. Harris

contacted Officer Chimney and asked if he could try to locate Johnson.

Officer Chimney and his partner Mike Erickson went to several homeless shelters inquiring about Johnson. They were told to try the bus stop where Johnson was known to hang out. They did not locate him there but were directed to a nearby Texaco station, another known hangout.

Chimney and Erickson located Johnson at the Texaco and transported him to the NPC where he was stabilized. Chimney and Erickson contacted the family and Veterans Administration Hospital, helped arrange transport back to Ohio to his family, and helped make arrangements for Johnson to be seen at a mental health clinic in Toledo.

Expansion of Officer Intake Area at the NeuroPsychiatric Center Underway

Strict confidentiality laws mandate that the processing of consumers into mental health facilities be done in private. Fines can be levied against facilities not adhering to these laws.

Unfortunately, the NeuroPsychiatric Center (NPC) was designed with only one interview room in the officer intake area. Thus, only one consumer may be processed at a time. As law enforcement officers are increasingly taking consumers in for emergency psychiatric evaluation, at times officers wait in lines outside to be processed. This prolongs their time at the NPC and is an officer safety issue.



The entrance into the officer intake area is blocked off during expansion. Officers are reminded to secure their weapons before entering the building.

Lieutenant Mike Lee discussed this issue with Dr. Steven Schnee, Executive Director of the Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) of Harris County, which runs the NPC. Lieutenant Lee recommended an expansion of the officer intake area. Dr. Schnee was



Although it will be an inconvenience during the renovation with construction vehicles and equipment, the expansion will be well worth it increasing the intake capacity from one consumer to three, shortening the wait time for officers.

very receptive and approved the expansion.

The expansion, which is underway, will add two additional interview rooms.

Renovation is expected to take three to four months to complete. The back dock is still open and officers are allowed to park in the back. The doors to the intake are blocked.



The temporary entrance into the officer intake area is the service entrance in the back dock.

Access to the officer intake area is through the service entrance. Officers are reminded to secure their weapons before entering the building.

The improvement will be well worth the temporary inconvenience. Up to three officers will be able to process consumers at one time.



The current officer intake area (pictured above) is being expanded from one interview room to three.

We are fortunate to have a very close working relationship with MHMRA and that they are receptive to our concerns. We are also fortunate to have a facility like the NPC. Most law enforcement agencies in Texas utilize the state hospital system for emergency psychiatric evaluations. They spend hours transporting consumers to these widespread facilities. In many jurisdictions, officers cannot take consumers to their facilities if the consumer is violent, abusing alcohol or drugs, or a juvenile.

MHMRA currently spends \$9,000,000 a year to run the NPC.

CIT Statistics

January 1, 2009 through October 31, 2009

Total Number of CIT Calls = 21,203

Division	District(s)	No. of CIT Calls	Percentage of Total Calls
Bush (IAH)	21	41	0.19%
Central	1, 2	2263	10.6%
Clear Lake	12	894	4%
Eastside	11	508	2.4%
Fondren	17	1288	6%
Hobby / Ellington	23	10	0.04%
Kingwood	24	387	1.8%
Midwest	18	1090	5%
North	3, 6	2847	13%
Northeast	7, 8, 9	2521	11.9%
Northwest	4, 5	1032	4.8%
South Central	10	1801	8.4%
Southeast	13, 14	2567	12%
Southwest	15, 16	1404	6.5%
Westside	19, 20	2550	12%

NOTE: Information for Special Operations not available at this time.

New Jersey is 43rd State to Adopt Assisted Outpatient Treatment

S.B. 735 will help those with severe mental illnesses who are too sick to help themselves

New Jersey significantly reformed its mental illness treatment law on August 11th when Governor Corzine signed Senate Bill 735 into law.

Senator Richard Codey and countless advocates battled for years to give New Jersey a way to better help those who refuse treatment because of incapacitating symptoms of illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. "Our goal is to minimize time in the hospital and keep patients in the least restrictive environment that will help foster their recovery," said Codey.

The law improves New Jersey's ability to provide treatment to people with severe mental illness by allowing

for outpatient commitments as an alternative to inpatient hospitalization.

"Senator Richard Codey and countless advocates battled for years to give New Jersey a way to better help those who refuse treatment because of incapacitating symptoms of illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder."

"This measure provides another mechanism to treat that small group of people who are extremely ill and unable to seek treatment voluntarily," said James Pavle, executive director of the national Treatment Advocacy Center.

"As a mental health professional and a consumer of mental health services in New Jersey, I am pleased to see this law passed," said Valerie Fox. "When a person is held in the grip of voices and delusion and does not have the use of free will, it is humane to care for that person until he/she regains the ability to make rational decisions."

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