



## Fostering Strategic Collaborations

### **Partnerships With Public Safety and Mental Health Providers**

**Campus housing and residence life departments must strive to identify partners to help develop business operations, enhance the community, provide efficiencies, and improve service. These partners may be found on campus, in the community, or within the larger campus housing industry and vendor community.**

An essential responsibility for managing a campus residential program is the well-being of their residents. As mental-health-incidents increase in severity and scope, professionals outside of the housing and residence life team need to be brought in to assist with addressing situations. In order to provide the best service possible, the responding parties need to understand each other's roles, responsibilities, and limitations. Having conversations and agreements worked out in advance is critical to ensuring that the response is handled as smoothly and successfully as possible.

To help maximize these partnerships, the following resources will help campuses establish a sample agenda for regular meetings with public safety and mental health professionals to ensure housing and residence life staff possess the most current trends and information. There also are guidelines for memorandums of understanding or checklists for HRL teams to use with public safety (on- and off-campus entities) and mental health professionals and counseling centers regarding who will respond and when to the most common incidents in residence halls.

### **Agenda Items for Public Safety and Mental Health Partner Meetings**

While most institutions polled do not have set agendas for regular meetings between housing offices and their public safety and/or mental health providers, there are certain themes that were apparent when discussing what these meetings set out to accomplish. These typical agenda items include the following:

- Recent situations (or trends) of note to follow-up and learn from
- Students of concern and how offices can collaborate in providing support
- Events taking place on-campus and impact to the community if any
- Establish a shared agreement between areas regarding required follow-up for post-hospitalization

### **Items for Public Safety and Mental Health Partner MOUs**

Most departments have written protocols that inform staff how to respond in crisis situations. Protocols are reviewed annually to ensure they are accurate and the staff implementing the protocol are trained on how to use it. Often these protocols live within the department and are not reviewed by the partners named in the protocol.

One consideration for partnership is to invite all areas who intersect with the protocols to review their role and confirm continued agreement on implementation. This agreement should be reviewed annually and approved by all partners.

- What are the most common types of situations for partnership?
- Who will respond? In person? Over the phone?
- When they respond, what is the expected outcome and how is information shared with one another?



## Trends in Partnering with Public Safety and Mental Health Professionals

Between articles, podcasts, and interviews, there is an abundance of great information readily available of innovative new practices that could benefit the future of the housing profession. Here are a few trends identified when reviewing what is taking place at schools across the country:

- There is a trend of innovation among institutions where some schools are incorporating their public safety teams for after-hours responses while others are creating incident response teams or additional work shifts taking place after-hours to better meet students' needs while alleviating some or all of the responsibility on professional housing staff.
- Institutions trying different tactics may have had professional housing staff take calls up until a certain point or starting a certain point but not all night long. One institution had their professional housing staff take calls after-hours until 1 AM and then their Public Safety office took over the calls and response from 1-8 AM. Another had their Incident Response Team take calls from 5 PM to 2:45 AM, and then their professional housing staff took calls from 2:45-8 AM.
- Some schools are reconsidering the role of student staff when it comes to emergency response and on-call work to instead focus on community building and being a resource referral. In these cases, the after-hours response was transitioned to professional staff or incident response teams.

## Resources for Partnering with Public Safety and Mental Health Professionals

- Baumann, J. A. (2021, Sep-Oct). Housing and counseling partnering up for mental health. *The Talking Stick*. [https://ts.acuho-i.org/september\\_2021/teaming\\_up.html](https://ts.acuho-i.org/september_2021/teaming_up.html)
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- McGartland-Kinsella, K. (2013, May-Jun). Healing in Housing: Advancing Mental Health Support on Campus. *The Talking Stick*, 30(5), 32-63. [https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/acuho/talkingstick\\_20130506/index.php#/p/32](https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/acuho/talkingstick_20130506/index.php#/p/32)