



**KEARNEY POLICE DEPARTMENT/BUFFALO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
JOINT PRESS RELEASE**



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**Kearney/Buffalo County Crisis Co-Responder Program**

A new and exciting program is emerging in Buffalo County that is the result of a unique, collaborative effort of the Buffalo County Sheriff's Office, the Kearney Police Department, Lutheran Family Services and Region 3 Behavioral Health Services. Lutheran Family Services is partnering with the Kearney Police Department and Buffalo County Sheriff's Office to hire a community outreach coordinator and a crisis co-responder to embed within the departments to assist officers responding to calls that are not necessarily criminal may be related to a mental health crisis.

LFS has been a leader in training law enforcement departments and staff across Nebraska to recognize and respond to calls that often have a strong mental or behavioral health component. "The next stage in helping our communities provide safety, hope, and wellbeing is to increase the presence of mental health professionals in departments in more communities," said Brad Negrete, LFS's director of Urgent and Crisis Response Services. "For many people in crisis – whether it's a citizen experiencing an emotional episode, medication issue, or dealing with a loved one who is in danger of hurting oneself or someone in their proximity – most people's first instinct is to call 9-1-1," Negrete said. Providing training and support to law enforcement professionals allows them to respond more appropriately to such crises.

Having a licensed mental health practitioner who can go out with the responding officers can have a life-changing outcome for the people in distress. The mental health co-responder can work with the officer and the citizen to ensure the safety of all people involved and get people the assistance they need, whether that means in-patient medical attention/hospital admission or establishing a relationship for further care and treatment.

"This program is a prime example of a collaborative strategy toward best practices with the goal of providing appropriate services to those experiencing crisis while providing a resource for our police officers and deputies when a call for service involves challenging circumstances. I believe our community will benefit beyond measure through this program. We are thankful for the remarkable relationship we enjoy with Buffalo County Sheriff Miller, and Region 3. The partnership with Lutheran Family Services for community outreach and crisis co-responder is essential to the success of our program. I look forward to the partnership", said Chief Waugh, Kearney Police.



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Co-responders accompany law enforcement officers responding to calls from citizens who appear to have a behavioral health concern. They assess the immediate needs of individuals on the spot and help de-escalate the situation with the goal of crisis stabilization hospital and jail diversion.

“We are very excited about this program! There is not a day that goes by that we are not in some form working with people who are in a mental health crisis. Our deputies and officers will have the tools they need to provide for a better outcome for those calling us in need of help as well as follow-up services. This program will allow us to collaborate with our partner agencies in the true spirit of cooperation that we have come to enjoy here in Kearney and Buffalo County. I would like to thank Kearney Police Chief Waugh and Region 3 for their dedication in working together on quality of life issues for our area. Having Lutheran Family Services as a part of our team will help to ensure our success in providing the best outcome for those in need of help”, said Sheriff Miller, Buffalo County.

Community outreach coordinators provide direct support and referral services. They assist in connecting people to appropriate mental health, substance abuse, and medical providers; respond to written referrals received from officers after an encounter; follow up in person with individuals who need mental or behavioral health services, and continue to check on the wellbeing of consumers.

Lutheran Family Services is actively accepting applications for a Therapist – Crisis Response Co-Responder in Kearney. Interested applicants can learn more and apply by visiting the following link, or contact Brad Negrete, Lutheran Family Services, Director of Urgent Care and Crisis Response at (402) 672-0670, [bnegrete@Lfsneb.org](mailto:bnegrete@Lfsneb.org).

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/30d2432f/9kRbbaFEUE\\_K2HJD7bP2Sw?u=https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/904535/Lutheran-Family-Services-of-NE-Inc/Therapist---Crisis-Response-Co-Responder](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/30d2432f/9kRbbaFEUE_K2HJD7bP2Sw?u=https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/904535/Lutheran-Family-Services-of-NE-Inc/Therapist---Crisis-Response-Co-Responder)