



NEWS RELEASE

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Mental Health Technician Paired Up with Ventura Police Officers in Assisting Ventura's Homeless Population

The Ventura Police Department now has a full-time mental health technician embedded within the Ventura Police Patrol Task Force. The technician will be responsible for case management and outreach for the homeless population suffering from mental health issues. The effort is a partnership with Ventura County Behavioral Health and is funded through a Triage Grant.

"We are not going to arrest our way out of homelessness. Instead, we must find more innovative ways to identify and address the individual needs of our homeless residents. This new partnership between VPD and Ventura County Behavioral Health is exactly the type of innovative approach we need to address the mental health issues prevalent in our homeless population. Not only will it lead to more effective policing, it will also provide critical services and support to help our homeless get off the streets," said Mayor Matt LaVere.

Diana Gasmi has been selected to fulfill the technician position. She is a bilingual Community Services Coordinator for Ventura County Behavioral Health, where she has been employed for the past 12 years in providing outreach and engagement to individuals with psychiatric disabilities in different regions throughout Ventura County. She has experience in psychiatric assessment, diagnostic and evaluation needs as well as the ability to provide advocacy, case management, and linkage to public benefits and appropriate community referrals.

"Partnering with Behavioral Health is a positive step in addressing the mental health of our homeless population," said Ventura Police Commander Rick Murray.

The Patrol Task Force is engaged in what's called restorative policing, or street outreach. This means that officers are working with chronic vagrancy offenders or displaced individuals, by uniting them with family or friends if they desire or getting them appropriate medical attention, they need to get off the streets. The mental health technician will come along side officers to assist in evaluating individuals and connecting them to resources for long term solutions.

The effort is part of the Safe and Clean Initiative which was adopted by Ventura City Council in 2011. The initiative redirects limited City resources and utilizes partnerships so that public places remain safe and clean for everyone to enjoy. The approach to Safe and Clean public places has five core elements that strive to align municipal, private philanthropy, business and non-profit resources. By mobilizing local entities, sharing data and involving key stakeholders across sectors the City of Ventura aims to retain secure public places.