

## **The Police Assisted Referral Program Executive Summary**

**Brief Narrative:** The Police Assisted Referral Program (PAR) is a joint effort aligning the CALEA-accredited Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department (CMHAPD), the Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, Mental Health Services, Inc. (MHS) and Case Western Reserve University's Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education. The program currently focuses on child witnesses of violence and their families, creating a conduit for CMHAPD police officers to connect children and non-offending adults with MHS for education, screening, services and treatment. Initial funding provided by the Department of Justice allowed the PAR project to be launched in December 2009 as a pilot.

In brief, CMHAPD officers responding to violence-related service calls are trained to identify eligible individuals and families in need of services. Officers, at the time of the service call, make the referral directly to MHS and provide the family with a referral card outlining what to expect. Officers clearly communicate to residents that MHS staff are not affiliated with the police, CMHA or Cuyahoga County Child and Family Services. MHS staff contact the family within 24 hours to provide consultation and information and to schedule a home visit, if desired by the family. MHS acknowledges each officer's referral by sending an acknowledgment letter to the police officer and a copy to the CMHAPD Chief of Police.

PAR provides CMHAPD officers the ability to fulfill their role as first social responders and receive personal satisfaction in knowing that they have helped a family in desperate need of help. The families receive immediate access to services that help them to heal.

Goldstein Award Submission 2011  
Center for Problem-Oriented Policing

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department

## **Police Assisted Referral Program**

### **Project Information**

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department

Police Assisted Referral Program

Inception Date: December, 2009

### **Partners**

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department

The Partnership for A Safer Cleveland

Mental Health Services, Inc. Cleveland Ohio

The Begun Center for Violence Prevention, Research & Education at

Case Western Reserve University

**Funding Sources:** STANCE, City of Cleveland, OJJDP

The Police Assisted Referral (PAR) initiative is a joint programming effort aligning the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department (CMHAPD), Mental Health Services, Inc. (MHS), Partnership for a Safer Cleveland and Case Western Reserve University's Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education. The initiative currently focuses on child witnesses of violence and their families, creating a conduit for CMHAPD to connect children and non-offending adults with MHS for screening, services and treatment, or additional referrals. The primary target population

is youths aged 8-18 years who have either been exposed to violence or perpetrated violence; younger children and non-offending adult family members are also served.

**BACKGROUND (Scanning):** PAR directly serves youths and families residing in Cleveland area public housing (Cuyahoga Metropolitan Public Housing Authority - CMHA). CMHA is one of the ten largest housing authorities in the country, assisting over 50,000 individuals (primarily African American) living in public-assisted housing. Nearly 7,000 children under 18 years live in CMHA properties, in mostly single-parent households (96.5% female-headed). CMHA maintains a state-certified police department that provides law enforcement services to CMHA residents, employees and visitors of its properties. The CMHAPD has achieved CALEA accreditation since 1988 and is one of only four housing authority police departments in the country and the second largest in terms of staffing. The CMHAPD is functional 24/7/365 and maintains several specialized units and activities, including Community Policing, K-9 Unit, SWAT, Detective Bureau, Juvenile/Youth Gang Unit and a Disaster Planning/Safety Management Division.

**IDENTIFICATION OF NEED FOR PROTOCOL (Analysis):** Children are exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and communities, as well as perpetrating violence. In a recent report of the 25 most dangerous neighborhoods in the United States, two were Cleveland CMHA neighborhoods (Scovill Avenue #2 and Chestnut Place #20 – see: <http://www.walletpop.com/2010/10/04/25-most-dangerous-neighborhoods-2010/>).

Cleveland is currently the second most impoverished U.S. city (U.S. Census Bureau). The overwhelming exposure to violence in these neighborhoods has created

an environment in which youths become hypervigilant, distrustful of others, especially police, and emotionally and behaviorally compromised. Additionally, children and their families living in high crime neighborhoods often do not have access to community/social services. Such lack of access is particularly true in urban public housing estates.

From a law enforcement perspective, data from numerous studies over the past four decades reveal that a majority of police patrol time is spent on non-criminal related activities. For example, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that police spent 90 percent of their time attending to a variety of service calls compared with 10 percent of their time spent on criminal matters. Thus police officers are often, in fact, first social responders and are aware of individual and family problems in the early stage, before these problems reach a social service agency. Numerous studies have demonstrated that early identification and intervention of children exposed to violence is essential to prevent future delinquent behavior, including gang involvement, and emotional/behavioral problems.

A review of 2008 calls for service to the CMHAPD reflected over 800 instances of some form of family violence incidents, with many repeat calls to the same families. Usually, behind each such call are children who have witnessed the violence. They needed to be treated like victims, not just bystanders, ones who statistics prove have a propensity to continue the cycle of violence (domestic and otherwise) if they do not receive help at this stage.

**DEVELOPING THE PROTOCOL (Response):** The Police Assisted Referral Program (PAR) was created by a mutual need/vision among several youth-serving agencies. The CMHAPD, the Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, and MHS are all located in the City of Cleveland and have been consistently and deeply involved in serving high-risk youths in low-income, high crime neighborhoods. Over the past 23 years, Mental Health Services has been a leading provider of crisis care, mental health, and vital supportive services for highly vulnerable populations in Cleveland. For nearly three decades, the Partnership for a Safer Cleveland has promoted best practices and effective violence prevention programs in the greater Cleveland area through collaborations with public and private partners, for the purposes of preventing youth crime and violence and reducing youth involvement in the justice system. Chartered in 1973, CMHAPD's mission, as part of the larger Housing Authority, is to be leader in providing safe quality affordable housing for individuals and families of Cuyahoga County.

These three agencies, in collaboration with Case Western Reserve University, joined to create and sustain the PAR program—an opportunity to give these victims a voice and connect them with agencies and services to help them heal and help break the cycle of violence. The PAR program was also designed to help ameliorate the distrust and alienation often experienced by individuals living in these environments and to provide meaningful outreach services for children and their families.

The Police Assisted Referral program (PAR) was launched in December 2009 and is anchored in three principles:

1. police are often first social responders for a variety of human service issues;

2. early identification and intervention of families and children exposed to violence is critical; and
3. being properly trained and equipped, CMHAPD officers are ready, willing and able to assist citizens in finding help for their problems.

A total of 35 CMHAPD Officers attended a half-day training prior to the launch of PAR. The training focused on providing officers a primer on child development, common emotional/behavioral problems of children and domestic violence, while also communicating instructions for the implementation of the PAR program. This training was provided by experts from Mental Health Services, Inc., the Partnership for A Safer Cleveland and the Case Western Reserve University Begun Center. In the training evaluation, 97% of officer respondents indicated that the information related to child development and domestic violence would be somewhat or very useful in their future work. 100% of officer respondents thought that the ability to refer individuals for help with domestic violence would have a positive impact on their work with CMHA residents.

Through the PAR program, CMHAPD officers, at the time of the service call, make an immediate referral directly to the Mental Health Services, Inc. (MHS) hotline and provide the family with a referral card outlining what to expect. This service is available 24/7/365. Officers clearly communicate to residents that MHS staff are not affiliated with the police, CMHA, or Cuyahoga County Child and Family Services. MHS staff then contacts the family within 24 hours to provide consultation, an intervention and schedule a home visit if preferred by the family. Services or additional referrals are offered based on the need of the family. MHS acknowledges each officer's referral by sending an

acknowledgement letter to the officer and a copy to the Chief of Police.

The objectives of the PAR program are:

1. CMHA police officers will provide citizens with referrals for children/family services in meaningful numbers each day of the week across all shifts;
2. Police referrals will result in citizen contact by MHS;
3. Significant numbers of violence-exposed children and their families will be identified who have previously been unserved/underserved; and,
4. Police officers will view these referrals as a significant asset to their interactions with citizens.

**Program Assessment:** Initially, the number of referrals to MHS was limited. Additionally, the MHS staff who personally came to the resident's homes had perceptions of fear of the housing authority environment and sometimes requested police escorts onto the properties, especially for night/early morning visits. But as the officers became more comfortable with the program and began to receive compliments and thanks for the referrals, the numbers rapidly increased. Happily, MHS staff's personal safety realities were far different from their perceptions, the MHS staff became totally comfortable with visiting the public housing properties. After working through these obstacles, PAR began to achieve impressive levels of acceptance. Program evaluations have shown that PAR has become totally integrated into the normal protocols of CMHAPD. In 2010 there were 504 separate incident calls generating 485

adult referrals and 666 child referrals. 51 officers were shown to have made referrals, with an average of rate of 22 referral per year, per officer.

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<b>CMHAPD P.A.R. 2010 STATISTICS</b>		<b>Reasons For Referrals (Types of Reports Generated)</b>	
Total Reports Generated	504	Domestic Violence	407
Total Children Referred	666	Felonious Assault/Assault	24
Total Adults Referred	485	Gross Sexual Imposition/ Sexual Imposition	16
Total Individuals Referred	1151	Need To Be Referred	14
Total Arrests Made	184	Rape/Attempted Rape/Sexual Assault	12
		Child Endangering/Neglect	11
		Agg. Menacing/Menacing	5
		Aggravated Burglary/Burglary	5
		Kidnapping/ Child Enticement	3
		Assistance/Crisis Intervention	2
		Aggravated Robbery/Robbery	2
		Public Indecency	1
		Unruly Juvenile	1
		Missing Juvenile	1
		Injury to Child	1

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Objectively, students at Case Western Reserve University’s Begun Center for Violence Prevention, Research and Education completed a complete evaluation of the **first six months of the program**. The evaluation included CMHA police data, MHS service/contact data, and information from formal focus groups conducted with CMHA police officers. The information that follows was obtained from this evaluation and addresses the PAR program objectives.

**PAR Objective #1–Goal Achieved.** A total of 44 officers made referrals (this number represents all officers attending the training plus 9 additional officers who were subsequently trained). Officers made between 1 and 39 referrals



(mean = 10.4). Additionally, individual referral calls yielded between 1 and 6 clients being served (mean = 1.7). Referrals were made steadily throughout the week, with slight increases on Mondays and Wednesdays, and greater increases on Saturdays and Sundays. Additionally, referral times were shown to spike between 4:00 and 6:00PM, and 10:00PM and midnight. The number of referrals fluctuated modestly by month, with a high in June (80 referrals) and a low in December (48 referrals due to program inception, partial month). The overwhelming majority of referrals (94%) were for youths 19 years and younger.

**PAR Objectives #2 and #3—Goals Achieved.** A total of 460 referrals were been made to MHS during the evaluation period. As multiple children could be referred as a result from a single incident, to avoid duplicated counts, specific variables are reported based on the primary client, which is used as a proxy for the incident. There were 257 separate incidents generating the 460 referrals. The data indicate that 98% of PAR referrals resulted in some level of service including: domestic violence/trauma education, crisis and referral services, and/or ongoing MHS services. Only 20 cases reported already receiving services from another agency, suggesting that the program was reaching underserved/unserved individuals.

**PAR Objective #4—Goal Achieved.** Focus group research conducted with CMHAPD officers revealed layered benefits within the PAR program. Officers noted that CMHA residents almost unvaryingly accept the referral to MHS

services. Reflecting on one referral, an officer remarked that the citizen “was very happy [to receive a referral]... she never had nothing like that before... she needed someone she can talk to...” Officers uniformly indicated that the number of repeat calls has decreased after presenting the resident with a referral and that, occasionally, when on patrol a resident will stop them to thank them for the help. Finally, officers indicated the program has provided them with a measure of relief. One veteran indicated that he can “sleep at night” instead of worrying about the families he has interacted with. Another officer summed up the benefit of the program, “...as long as I've worked here, 18 years, this is the first time to actually talk to another person and help them out with a problem that they have.”

As one CMHA police officer stated in the previously mentioned focus group, “It’s a big piece of mind for us too: one, not having to deal with the same people again and, two, to know that finally something was done about it so you don’t sit there any wonder about it all the time.” We are pleased to provide a program for the early identification and intervention for children exposed to violence and their families, and a mechanism that facilitates officers’ important role as first social responders. The participating agencies have a long-term commitment to the PAR program and a strong belief that this program will serve as a national model for police/community partnership.

**The past need not be the future.** As previously stated, the majority of an officer’s time is spent in non-arrest situations. Police and academy training emphasizes criminal and administrative aspects of policing, without teaching recruits how to engage families/youths. The typical duty belt of a police officer contains a handgun, additional

ammunition, a taser, handcuffs, rubber gloves and an expandable baton—items for arrest/deterrence. Interestingly, studies report that recruits are attracted to policing for the opportunity to help people, but once out in the field, officers learn that they can either arrest, or walk away. The PAR program provides an officer with a much-needed additional item for the duty belt: an ability to refer immediately for social services in the form of a referral card that brings help to them within 24 hours.

Though PAR is limited in focus to child witnesses to violence and their adult, non-offending family members, informal feedback from officers indicates a need for expansion into other types of common non-arrest situations, most notably, police interactions with delinquent youth and their families.

**Replication.** The beauty of the PAR program is its absolute simplicity in operation that yields exceptional results. There was no need to establish formal policies or procedures within the CMHAPD. The Department members now consider the program as part of what they do on a daily basis. New officers are oriented to the PAR program at the time of their general orientation and shadowing.

The CMHAPD PAR program is easily replicated in both small and large jurisdictions in the United States. With law enforcement agencies taking the lead, the development of a collaborative should begin with community stakeholders, professional social service organizations and local educators all coming together to organize an immediate response to victims of violence.

Agencies should collaboratively search out unique and creative funding sources such as grants, in-kind services, and program dollars from the collective members.

# “Help Is On The Way” Referral Cards

These are the cards that the CMHAPD Officers give to families who have been victims of family violence.

The cards are the same size as a regular business card, printed on both sides. They are light blue because studies have shown the color blue to be calming.



**CMHA POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
5715 Woodland Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio 44104  
Emergency: (216) 391-CMHA (2642)

Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**HELP IS ON THE WAY**

Professionals from a private intervention agency will be contacting you soon. These professionals are NOT CONNECTED to the police, CMHA or kids abuse agency.

**The people you will be seeing want to help you and can be trusted.**

Make sure to ask any questions you might have to the person coming to help you and your family. You could even prepare questions to ask before the person arrives.

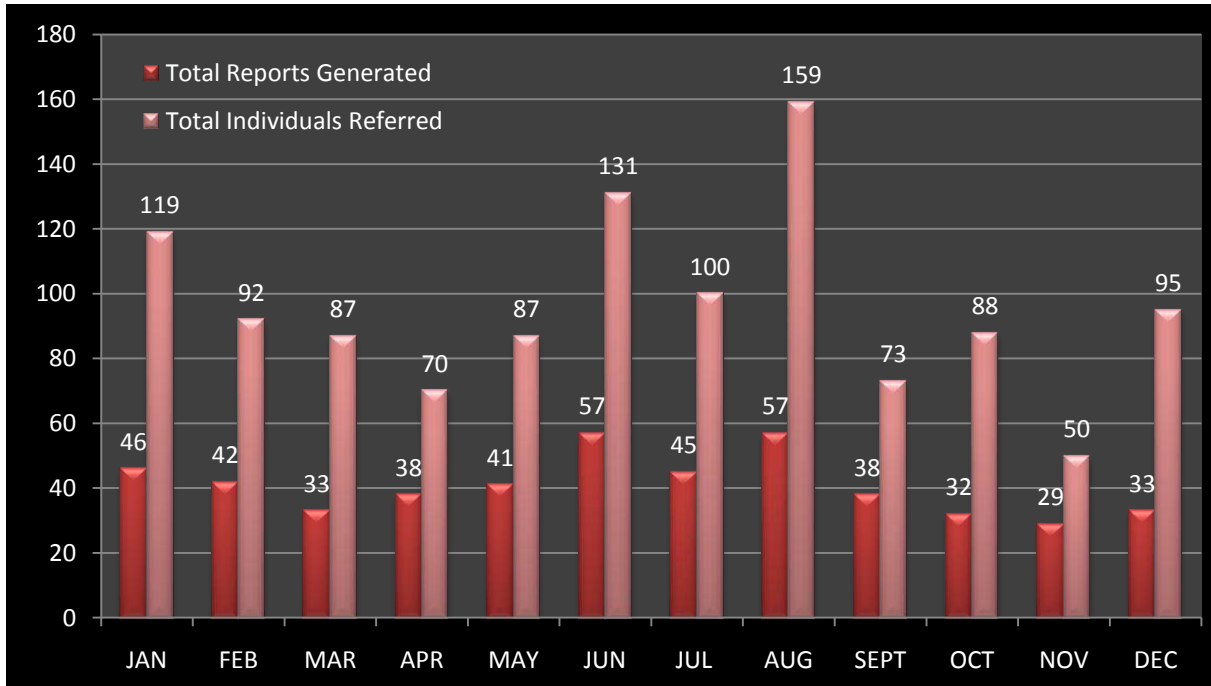
Try to relax. Do things that make you relaxed and calm.

# ATTACHMENT B

## 2010 Statistics for the CMHAPD PAR Program

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department

# POLICE ASSISTED REFERRAL PROGRAM (PAR) Client Demographics for 2010



- 1151 Individuals referred through 504 calls for service
- Average of 3.15 referrals per day

## ATTACHMENT C

Sample of monthly letter sent to the  
CMHAPD Police Chief  
from Mental Health Service, Inc.  
referencing the previous month's  
referrals by CMHAPD officers.



Ending homelessness. Preventing suicide.

18 January 2011

FELLOW MEMBERS:

YOUR WORK IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK -

*[Signature]*

cc: FILES  
PO WEIS

Chief Andres Gonzalez  
Chief of Police  
Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority  
5715 Woodland Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44104

Dear Chief Gonzalez,

Thank you for your continued participation in the Children Who Witness Violence Program. You have helped us by identifying children who have witnessed or been involved in traumatic experiences, and because of your assistance, we have been able to serve these children and families.

In December, we received 25 referrals from officers in CMHA Police Department. This is an increase from November's total of 21 referrals. We ask for your continued help to assure that all families who qualify for our program receive an opportunity for our services. We also ask that your officers continue to call our hotline at (216) 623-6888 any time that a child between the ages of 0 and 17 is involved in or witnesses a violent act.

Again, we appreciate your hard work and your involvement in the effort to help innocent children. Please remind your officers of the importance of our program, its benefit in the present, and its impact on the future.

Sincerely,

*[Handwritten signature: Rosemary H. Creeden]*

Rosemary H. Creeden, LISW  
Program Manager  
Children Who Witness Violence Program

[www.mhs-inc.org](http://www.mhs-inc.org)

MHS MAIN OFFICE: 1744 Payne Avenue Cleveland, OH 44114  
MAIN: 216.623.6555 MOBILE CRISIS HOTLINE: 216.623.6888



# ATTACHMENT D

Informative brochure  
developed for the  
program.

# The Police Assisted Referral Program

*A Collaboration of Purpose and Promise*

Chartered in 1973, the mission of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department (CMHAPD) is to be the leader in providing safe quality affordable housing for individuals and families of Cuyahoga County. The CMHAPD's Police Assisted Referral (**PAR**) program was created as a result of a mutual vision among the Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, Mental Health Services (MHS), Inc., and Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) all located in the City of Cleveland (Ohio). These organizations have consistently served families and youths in low-income, high crime neighborhoods.

**PAR** provides for the early identification and intervention of families and children exposed to violence. **PAR** recognizes that police officers are often first responders for social-related issues. The participating agencies have made a long-term commitment and believe that **PAR** will serve as a national model for improving police/community partnerships.



# Police Assisted Referral Program



## CUYAHOGA METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

5715 Woodland Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44104-2740  
Andrés González, Chief of Police  
Phone: 216-426-7807 | cmhapd.org

## Program Partners

### **PARTNERSHIP FOR A SAFER CLEVELAND**

2239 East 14th Street | Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2329  
Phone: 216.523.1128 | safercleveland.org

### **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, INC. CHILDREN WHO WITNESS VIOLENCE PROGRAM**

1744 Payne Avenue | Cleveland, Ohio 44114-2910  
Phone: 216-623-6555 | mhs-inc.org

### **THE BEGUN CENTER FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESEARCH AND EDUCATION MANDEL SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY**

11235 Bellflower Road | Cleveland, Ohio 44106  
Phone 216.368.2290 | msass.case.edu/begun

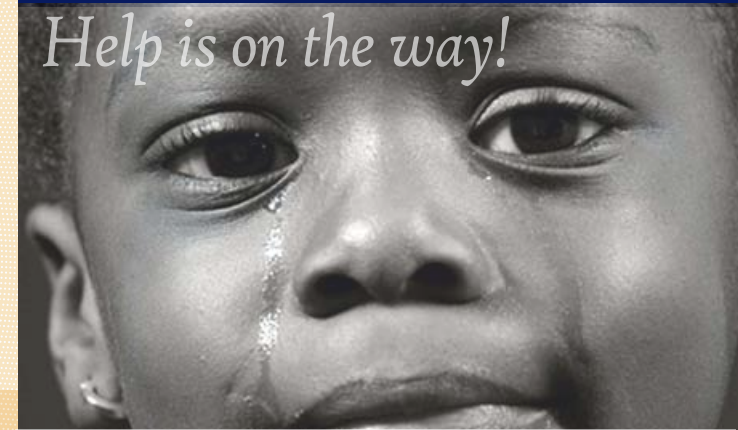
Initial project funding provided by  
STANCE Cleveland • The City of Cleveland  
The United States Department of Justice,  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

CUYAHOGA METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY POLICE DEPARTMENT



# Police Assisted Referral Program

*Help is on the way!*



*For the early identification and intervention of families and children exposed to violence.*





# What is the Police Assisted Referral (PAR) Program?

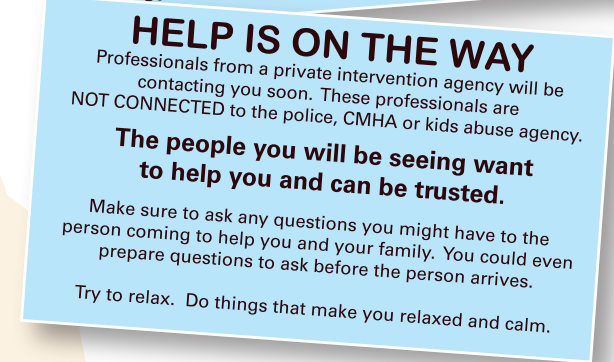
Studies reveal that a majority of police patrol time is spent on non-criminal related activities. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that police spent 90 percent of their time attending to a variety of service calls compared with 10 percent of their time spent on criminal matters. Thus police officers are often, in fact, first social responders, and are aware of individual and family problems in the early stages, before these problems reach a social service agency. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that early identification and intervention of children exposed to violence is essential to prevent future delinquent behavior, including gang involvement, and emotional/behavioral problems.

CMHA Police Officers responding to violence-related service calls are trained to recognize the effects of violence to children. Officers offer assistance to families in need of services by making an immediate referral to the Mental Health Services (MHS) hotline. The family is provided with a referral card that outlines what to expect. This service is available 24/7/365.

Officers make sure to explain that accessing services through **PAR** will not affect their status with police, housing, or county services. MHS staff will contact the family within 24 hours to provide consultation, information and schedule a home visit if preferred by the family.

Services or additional referrals are offered based on the need of the family. MHS acknowledges an officer's referral by sending a confirmation letter to the officer.

*"Help Is On The Way" cards are given to families at the time of referral.*



## PAR IS ANCHORED IN THREE PRINCIPLES:

- 1) *Police are often first social responders for a variety of human service issues.*
- 2) *Early identification and intervention of families and children exposed to violence is critical.*
- 3) *Being properly trained and equipped, CMHAPD officers are ready, willing and able to assist citizens in finding help for their problems.*

