



Kern County Sheriff's Office
Policies and Procedures

TITLE: Virtual MET Program		NO: H-560	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: April 10, 2018	REVIEWED: 10/20/2020	REVISED:	UPDATED:

POLICY

The Kern County Sheriff's Office has recognized the growing need to extend mental health services to residents of Kern County. As a result, the Kern County Sheriff's Office has partnered with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) to extend services to substation areas of the community through the utilization of the Virtual MET System.

Virtual MET utilizes today's technology to provide citizens experiencing a mental health crisis with direct and immediate access to a mental health professional. This is accomplished through the use of an Apple iPad with a "Face-Time" type application called "ZOOM." The "ZOOM" application is in compliance with all HIPAA restrictions.

Deputies on duty in the substation areas of Kern County, equipped with BHRS's iPads, will make a reasonable effort to respond to all calls for service involving a citizen experiencing a mental health crisis to facilitate their needs. Those deputies will also assist other deputies with mental health related calls for service when reasonable.

DIRECTIVE A (UNAUTHORIZED USAGE)

These iPad units are designed for mental health services only. No additional applications or information will be added to the iPad. Any form of internet usage or social media communication is prohibited, and shall fall under the current restrictions governing electronic communication and department policy (DPPM J-3200). All iPads are subject to audit at any given time upon request by a ranking officer or BHRS.

Deputies assigned the Virtual MET iPads will be provided training prior to the iPads use.

PROCEDURE

- The deputy meets an individual (dispatched or on sight) who is experiencing a mental health crisis.
- The deputy working in a substation area is aware that a MET Unit is not available to respond in-person.
- The deputy makes a request for a V-MET call via the Communications Center.

- The Communications Center telephones the MET Team and advises the MET Unit of the deputy’s request.
- The Communications Center provides the MET Unit with the deputy’s contact telephone number, so they can make contact with each other.
 - During this contact, the Met Unit will gather a case report from the deputy as well as provide the deputy with the code to enter the “Virtual Room.”
- The MET Unit will initiate the “Virtual Call” (via “ZOOM”) and wait for the deputy to enter the “Virtual Room.”
- The deputy will stand by with the individual in crisis during the entire “Virtual Call” to ensure safety.
- The MET Unit then provides the crisis intervention and/or W&I 5150 Evaluation.
- After the MET Unit is done speaking with the client and collateral contacts (family/friends if there are any available), the MET Unit will inform the deputy of the disposition of the call.
- If the person in crisis responds well to intervention by MET, via “ZOOM”, the deputy will take the time to explain the instructions the MET Unit provided to the individual, to ensure he/she understands. The MET Unit will follow-up with the individual within 3 days, to link them to additional services.
- Once the “Virtual Call” is completed, the deputy and the Met Unit will each complete a brief survey regarding the effectiveness of the Virtual MET Program.

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