



FOR RELEASE ON: February 9, 2021

Contact Information:

Crisis & Counseling Centers
Amber Kruk, Director of Communications & Development
(207) 557-0534
akruk@crisisandcounseling.org

Crisis & Counseling Centers Slated to Launch Co-Responder Program in Partnership with Augusta Police Department to Combat Opioid Addiction and Overdoses

As part of [Governor Mills' OPTIONS initiative](#), licensed behavioral health clinicians will now be embedded within law enforcement agencies and working alongside first responders statewide.

(AUGUSTA, Maine, February 9, 2021) – In response to the OPTIONS (Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach, Naloxone and Safety) initiative introduced by the Mills Administration at the end of 2020 to better assist those suffering from substance use disorders and to curb fatal opioid overdoses, Crisis & Counseling Centers has partnered with the Augusta Police Department (APD) to meet the goal of embedding licensed behavioral health clinicians within first responder services of Kennebec counties.

In conjunction with first responders, this OPTIONS liaison will be responsible for engaging in post-overdose follow up and helping with referrals; conducting proactive outreach to individuals and their families; delivering low-barrier harm reduction supports; and providing short-term counseling interventions when appropriate.

APD has partnered with Crisis & Counseling Centers for vital programming to serve public health needs in years past- experience that now lends itself to what has become a very able and organic partnership.

“We are grateful for the Augusta Police Department leadership and willingness to partner on this initiative with us. Our long history of partnership will undoubtedly strengthen our ability to begin connecting the community to the help they need now,” comments Heather Washburn, Director of Case Management Services for Crisis & Counseling Centers.

Jasmine “Jazzy” Daniels, who will serve as the Kennebec County OPTIONS Liaison has a long history of helping individuals who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Daniels who begins her training with the police department this week was collaboratively selected with APD and hired by Crisis & Counseling Centers. Programming should be fully launched by the end of March 2021.

The Augusta Police Department has expressed optimism about their partnership with Crisis & Counseling Centers and believe it's a step in the right direction toward combatting opioid misuse and overdose.

“The Augusta Police Department is so excited to partner with Crisis and Counseling and our OPTIONS Liaison to enhance our ability to provide the help to those in need. It has been a struggle at times in the past to connect our community members with these lifesaving resources and we are confident this program will make a difference,” remarks Augusta Chief of Police Jared Mills.

What was once a hush-hushed and highly stigmatized issue has steadily become a prevalent public health crisis over the last two decades in Maine according to [data](#) compiled since 1997, has left many afflicted with substance use disorder and their families suffering in silence without access to life-saving resources.

“This new initiative demonstrates a strong understanding that our fellow Mainer’s need help and that now is the time to act. We are incredibly honored to be working as part of this statewide initiative. We believe strongly that reducing harm, providing trusted connection, and linking individuals to resources and treatment are vital steps in curbing the rising rate of overdoses in our communities,” remarks Washburn.

The OPTIONS initiative, which also includes the Public Health Campaign and [website](#) is supported by existing federal funds, will support Maine’s 16 counties, through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Behavioral Health, and will operate with assistance from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maine Department of Public Safety. Additional information and resources are currently being compiled on a statewide here: knowyouroptions.me

About Crisis & Counseling Centers: Crisis & Counseling Centers is a 50-year-old multi-service mental health and substance abuse agency headquartered in Augusta, Maine, that provides a comprehensive treatment continuum which includes: Crisis Mobile Resolution and Crisis Stabilization Unit services; mental health, substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders treatment; statewide parent/caregiver support through its G.E.A.R. Parent Network program; Children’s Targeted Case Management; PATH Case Management services; Parents Case Management for pregnant women or parents struggling with substance use disorder; correctional behavioral health care services; medication management; and now OPTIONS. More information is available online at CrisisAndCounseling.org

If you’re thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Maine Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling (888) 568-1112.

####