

# FIRST RESPONDER

## Week of Appreciation!

Thank You for your dedication & service to Erie County



**Bay View Police Department**  
**Berlin Heights Police Department**  
**Berlin Township Fire Department**  
**Citizens Ambulance Service**  
**Erie County Sheriff's Office**  
**Florence Township Fire Department**  
**Groton Township Fire Department**  
**Huron Fire Division**  
**Huron Police Department**  
**Kelley's Island EMS Department**  
**Kelley's Island Police Department**  
**Kelley's Island Volunteer Fire Department**  
**LifeCare Ambulance**  
**Margaretta Township Fire Department**  
**Milan Fire Department**  
**Milan Police Department**  
**North Central EMS**  
**Ohio State Patrol - Milan Turnpike**  
**Ohio State Highway Patrol**  
**- Sandusky Patrol Post 22**  
**Perkins Township Fire Department**  
**Perkins Township Police Department**  
**Sandusky City Fire Department**  
**Sandusky City Police Department**  
**Vermilion Fire Department**  
**Vermilion Police Department**



*The following article provides information on the collaboration among several Erie County agencies for services to those struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse in the Erie County Jail. The ADAMHS board is incredibly grateful to those who work in the Erie County Jail.*

Many of the inmates in the Erie County Jail have a history of mental health and alcohol and/or drug addiction issues. The Erie County Sheriff's Office has numerous programs available within the jail for those inmates in need of services related to those issues. Most of these programs and services are funded by the Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Erie County, while the Erie County Health Department contracts for the provision of medical (nursing and physician services) in the jail and assists in the care of the mentally ill and addicted.

Current Erie County ADAMHS Board funding allows us to have a mental health counselor, employed by Firelands Counseling and Recovery Services, scheduled to work forty hours per week in the jail. This individual is a tremendous asset for the overall jail operation as he provides:

- 1) Inmate crisis mental health evaluations for both newly admitted and long-term inmates.
- 2) Ongoing mental health counseling for jail inmates upon their request. Many of the jail inmates have previous mental health diagnoses and they benefit from both counseling and reestablishment of a regimen of prescribed medication, with the overall goal being a reduction in the rate of recidivism for the individual.
- 3) Emergency referrals for inmates with acute psychiatric issues to state mental health facilities.
- 4) Mental health evaluations as requested by municipal court judges to allow for a proper analysis of an inmate's potential behavioral issues prior to consideration for potential release from custody by the individual courts.
- 5) Initial inmate drug and/or alcohol addiction assessments and referrals for appropriate outpatient services upon release from custody. Follow up addiction counseling is provided by Bayshore Counseling and each person released is assigned peer support with someone from Sandusky Artisans.

In addition, the ADAMHS Board also funds a program titled "Bridge the Gap," which allows for reimbursement to the Sheriff's Office for the cost of psychotropic medications initially prescribed to an inmate who is ordered to be released prior to finishing those prescribed medications. By allowing for such reimbursement, the individual has a supply of necessary medications to treat their condition until the next scheduled medical appointment after release from the jail. Such appointments may be weeks or months away and the medication that is provided to the inmate upon release may prevent future mental health crises from occurring prior to that next appointment.

Jail Corrections Officers work under very trying and difficult circumstances on a daily basis; they perform their duties with professionalism, dignity, and compassion. They are routinely required to provide care and oversight for mentally ill inmates, many of whom have been certified to be in need of immediate admission to an appropriate medical facility. However, due to the ongoing shortage of beds in the various mental health facilities throughout the state, these inmates must remain in the custody of the jail for the safety and security of the community, as well as for the inmates themselves, until a bed for that individual inmate becomes available. Most of our Corrections Officers have completed the standardized mental health Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and/or other courses of study designed specifically to educate those personnel in the care and handling of mentally ill individuals. The ADAMHS Board has routinely assisted in providing funding for this training.

The Health Department contacted jail medical staff also assists in the care and treatment of the mentally ill as well as providing treatment for their physical health needs. Many of the inmates experiencing mental health issues also present with coexisting physical injuries or disease that will respond to basic treatment protocols that are provided efficiently by our professional medical personnel. The medical staff dispenses all prescribed medications, including those to treat mental health issues, to the individual inmates.

The success stories related to the care and treatment of the mentally ill within the jail are too numerous to mention. Most of those success stories are related to circumstances involving a prior inmate who has accepted his/her mental health issue and is cooperating with treatment protocols as determined by the current physician or counselor—coming in to contact with a Corrections Officer or other jail employee and thanking that officer for the dignified and professional treatment that the individual received while in jail, leading that former inmate to acknowledge that they discovered while in jail that there was a better way of life available to them. Many of these individuals are clean, sober, and unrecognizable because of the marked difference in their appearance from when they were in jail, and it is gratifying for the Corrections Officers to know that, despite the violence and chaos that they deal with on a regular basis, they have made a marked difference in that individual's life.

Thank you for this opportunity to explain mental health treatment within the Erie County Jail.