



## Suffolk's Historic Police Reform and Reinvetion Plan Creates Programs Designed to Benefit Individuals with Mental Illness and/or Substance Abuse

(L>R) Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman, Cari Besserman - Director, Division of Community Mental Hygiene Services, Suffolk County Health Department, Deputy County Executive Vanessa Baird-Streeter, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, FSL President & CEO Karen Boorshtein, Suffolk County Police Commissioner Rodney Harrison, FSL CSO Jeffery Steigman, Suffolk County Health Commissioner Dr. Gregson H. Pigott, and Suffolk County Deputy Police Commissioner Risco D. Mention-Lewis, Esq. attended the March 24, 2022 Press Conference which was held at FSL's 24-hour DASH Crisis Care Center.

FSL is collaborating with the **Suffolk County Executive, Suffolk County Police, and Southampton Police**, as well as many **East End Town and Village law enforcement departments** as part of the important broader national movement of Police Reform. This three faceted project exemplifies a model of cooperation between a community behavioral health organization and law enforcement that previously did not exist in Suffolk County. The initiative aligns our efforts with an unmet need and seeks to ensure that those suffering from a mental health or substance use issue receive the right intervention, by the right professional at the right time.

The first facet is the 911 Diversion pilot where 911 calls received from individuals who have a behavioral health crisis are successfully transferred to the FSL's 24/7 crisis center hotline. The second facet is working with individuals who have a disproportionately



larger number of interactions with law enforcement over a time period that may appear to be related to behavioral health. Our goal is to reduce the amount of contact these individuals have with the police and instead attempt to meet their needs with our crisis intervention staff. The third facet involves utilizing Telehealth in the field. When police respond to a mental health or substance use call, and the officer requests our assistance, FSL's highly trained crisis staff will triage and assess each individual virtually, then determine best course of action for that individual.

Our hope is to have this model become the norm for communities across the country. The interventions and interactions that officers and the FSL team encounter have both immediate and long-term positive effects for the individuals and their loved ones. Working together with law enforcement, we are answering the needs of our community. While it's not always easy to find new paths, the positive outcomes of innovative programs and care models are leading the way for people to find treatment and begin their journey to a healthier life.