

SUBJECT:	POLICY #:
CLINICIAN AND OFFICER REMOTE EVALUATION (CORE) TELEHEALTH PROGRAM	
CALEA STANDARDS REFERENCE(S):	NO. OF PAGES:
1.1.3, 41.2.7, 82.2.1	7

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and direction in the use of the agency's Clinician and Officer Remote Evaluation (CORE) Telehealth Program. CORE is an innovative approach for responding to individuals in mental health crisis by remotely connecting a mental health clinician to a deputy and/or mental health consumer in the field using a tablet computer.

CORE is a collaboration between the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and The Harris Center for Mental Health (The Harris Center). CORE maximizes precious resources necessary to keep people out of overtaxed emergency rooms, psychiatric facilities, and jails.

It is not the purpose of this policy to provide specific operational procedures. That is addressed in command/division/unit standard operating procedures.

II. Definitions

CIT Call for Service: A call involving a person believed to be in a mental health crisis.

Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) - Patrol: A team of certified mental health peace officers and licensed practitioners from The Harris Center who respond to situations involving persons who may be experiencing a mental crisis. **[CALEA Standard 1.1.3]**

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT): Crisis Intervention Training began in Memphis, Tennessee in the late 1980s. It was developed by the Memphis Police Department in collaboration with local universities and mental health groups. CIT focuses on communication techniques to safely de-escalate situations involving individuals in mental health crisis. It is a best-practice program and has been adopted by law enforcement agencies across the nation and the world.

De-escalate: A deliberate attempt to reduce the necessity or intensity of force in order to verbally and safely resolve a confrontation.

Developmental Disability: Having a physical or mental impairment (such as intellectual developmental disability, autism, cerebral palsy, or spina bifida) that become apparent shortly after birth or during childhood and delays, limits, or

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prevents the progression of normal development (as in language, learning, or mobility).

Emergency Detention: A peace officer, without a warrant, may take a person into custody if the officer believes the person is mentally ill and because of that mental illness there is a substantial risk of serious harm to the person or others unless the person is immediately restrained, and the officer believes there is not sufficient time to obtain a warrant before taking the person into custody. **[Section 573.001, Texas Health & Safety Code]**

Mental Health Crisis: An in-progress event which may result from an illness, disease, or condition that substantially impacts a person's thoughts, perceptions of reality, emotional processes, or judgments and may significantly impair a person's behavior.

Mental Illness: An impairment of an individual's normal cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, caused by physiological or psychosocial factors. A person may be affected by mental illness if he or she displays an inability to think rationally (e.g., delusions or hallucinations); exercise adequate control over behavior or impulses (e.g., aggressive, suicidal, homicidal, sexual); and/or take reasonable care of his or her welfare with regard to basic provisions for clothing, food, shelter, or personal safety.

III. Legal References

- A. Texas Health & Safety Code, Section 573.001 (a)
- B. Texas Health & Safety Code, Section 573.001

IV. Policy

It is the policy of the HCSO to attempt to de-escalate any situation involving an individual who is demonstrating a mental health crisis while promoting the safety of the person, the public, and HCSO personnel. The HCSO shall attempt to resolve such incidents in the most humane, constructive, professional, and effective manner as possible when it is deemed reasonable, practical, and consistent with all established safety priorities. This includes people exhibiting signs of mental illness, substance use, developmental disability, and personal crisis. HCSO personnel should recognize behavior that is characteristic of the conditions mentioned above and particularly those behaviors that are potentially

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destructive and/or dangerous, so as to respond in ways that promote safety for all involved.

V. Program Organization

- A. CORE is a program of the Patrol Bureau.
- B. CORE deputies are assigned to all patrol districts and all shifts.
- C. All patrol deputies are eligible to become a CORE deputy.
- D. Some CORE deputies are volunteers; others are selected by the major of the Patrol Bureau.
- E. The number of CORE deputies is determined by The Harris Center, i.e. the number of deputies The Harris Center clinicians can respond to.
- F. CORE deputies maintain their regular chain of command; CORE deputies are not assigned to CIRT – Patrol.
- G. CORE deputies are in the calls for service rotation; they do not respond exclusively to mental health calls. However, the major of the Patrol Bureau may use CORE deputies as needed.
- H. The CORE coordinator is a position in the Patrol Bureau. The responsibilities of the CORE coordinator, who is selected by the major of the Patrol Bureau, include, but are not limited to:
 1. Maintain records and statistics
 2. Prepare reports
 3. Liaison with The Harris Center
 4. Inventory the tablets
 5. Respond to questions and concerns from CORE deputies
 6. Teach the two-hour CORE Orientation Class

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7. Assist in teaching the 40-hour Mental Health class

VI. Program Goals

The goals of CORE include the following:

- A. Civilian and deputy safety.
- B. Quick and affordable access to mental health professionals.
- C. The diversion of individuals with mental illness and/or psychosocial issues who have committed low-level, non-violent crimes from jail into mental health treatment when it is believed the person's mental illness or psychosocial issues were a factor in the commission of the crime.
- D. Assessment and triage of calls.
- E. The elimination of unnecessary transports to hospital emergency departments, mental health facilities, and jail.

VII. Equipment

- A. Tablets are provided by The Harris Center.
- B. Tablets are issued to CORE deputies by the HCSO CORE coordinator.
- C. CORE deputies are responsible for the care and maintenance of the tablets assigned to them.
- D. Tablets shall only be used with consumers willing to speak with a clinician.
- E. Tablets shall not be used on active in-progress calls for service or with combative consumers.
- F. Software updates will be provided and installed by The Harris Center.
- G. CORE tablets shall be used for job related business only. Computer applications that are job related may be used on the tablets. Approval must be obtained from the HCSO CORE coordinator prior to installing new applications.

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VIII. Training

Training is the foundation of the mental health programs in the HCSO. The professionalism, mission, and values of an agency are directly related to, and effected by, training. All deputies in the CORE program shall successfully complete a 40-hour mental health class provided by HCSO mental health trainers within one year of becoming a CORE deputy. They shall also successfully complete a two-hour CORE orientation class provided by the agency's CORE coordinator prior to being issued a tablet. **[CALEA Standard 41.2.7]**

IX. Incident Reports

Deputies shall complete an incident report for any incident that has a mental health component. This includes any time a tablet is used to connect to a mental health clinician. **(Refer to patrol policy #207 titled "Reports") [CALEA Standard 82.2.1]**

X. Juveniles

- A. A person 16 years of age or older may request admission to an inpatient mental health facility or for outpatient mental health services by filing a request with the administrator of the facility where admission or outpatient treatment is requested. **[Section 572.001 (a) Texas Health and Safety Code]**
- B. CORE clinicians will obtain consent from the parent or legal guardian of a juvenile before talking with him/her. If the juvenile is living in a group home, the caretaker may give consent.

XI. Body Cameras

Body cameras may remain on during a virtual assessment.

XII. Emergency Detention

Individuals meeting the criteria for emergency detention do not need to be assessed by a clinician. Peace officers have the duty to take individuals meeting criteria for an evaluation. However, if a deputy believes a person meets criteria

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but wants to confirm his/her opinion, the deputy may use the tablet to obtain an assessment. **[Section 573.001 Texas Health and Safety Code]**

XIII. Ultimate Authority

The CORE deputy on the scene decides if a consumer will be transported for an emergency detention. The clinician's role is to assess and provide recommendations. However, the clinician is a mental health professional and his/her recommendation should be strongly considered. Deputies acting contrary to the recommendation(s) of the clinician will document their reasons for doing so in an incident report.

XIV. Procedures

- A. CORE tablets are used to remotely connect a mental health clinician from The Harris Center with a deputy in the field. The clinician provides information and conducts an assessment on voluntary mental health consumers who are in crisis or in need of mental health assistance.
- B. CORE Survey Forms shall be completed after each use of the tablet when used to connect to a mental health clinician. The form is to be forwarded to the HCSO CORE coordinator. This is an electronic form located on the tablet.
 1. Regarding the CORE Survey Form, "Resolved on Scene" means you have left the consumer on the scene; no emergency detention was filed. In these situations, The Harris Center clinician will make a referral for a follow-up with the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT).
- C. CORE deputies do not automatically become primary when assisting deputies on CIT calls for service. It is the decision of the CORE deputy to take the primary role in such instances, unless directed to do so by a supervisor. If the CORE deputy does NOT become primary, but does utilize the tablet for a virtual assessment, the deputy shall make a supplement report documenting the findings of the assessment.
- D. Requests for assistance with CIT/mental health calls for service shall first be dispatched to a CIRT – Patrol unit. CIRT - Patrol units are the agency's highest level of response to individuals in mental health crises. If a CIRT – Patrol unit is not available, a CORE deputy may be dispatched.

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Revision

This policy has been revised on the below listed dates:

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References