

Justice Department Launches Investigation of Oklahoma's Mental Health Service System and Oklahoma City's and Oklahoma Police Department's Response to Mental Health Crises



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The Justice Department announced today that it has opened an investigation into the State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City and Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD).



The investigation will examine whether Oklahoma fails to provide community-based mental health services to people in Oklahoma County, leading to unnecessary admissions to psychiatric facilities and police contact. The investigation will also examine Oklahoma City's systems for responding to people experiencing behavioral health crises, including through the 911 call center and OKCPD.

Prior to the announcement, the department informed the offices of

Oklahoma's Governor, Attorney General, Commissioner for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Chief Executive Officer for the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, as well as Oklahoma City's Mayor, City Manager, Municipal Counselor and Chief of Police of the investigation. As part of this investigation, department officials will reach out to community groups and members of the public to learn about their experiences with mental health services in Oklahoma County, and Oklahoma City and OKCPD's response to mental health crises.

“Community-based mental health services, which are proven effective in transforming people's lives, are critical to preventing a cycle of unnecessary institutionalization and avoidable contacts with law enforcement,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. “The Civil Rights Division is committed to ensuring appropriate responses to behavioral health crises and protecting the civil rights of people with mental health disabilities.”

This investigation is being conducted pursuant to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits disability discrimination by state and local governments. The investigation is also being conducted pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which prohibits state and local governments from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives individuals of rights protected by the Constitution or federal law.

The Special Litigation Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, in Washington, D.C., will conduct this investigation.

Individuals with relevant information are encouraged to contact the

department via email at MentalHealth.Oklahoma@usdoj.gov or through the Civil Rights Division's Civil Rights Portal, available at <https://civilrights.justice.gov/>.

Additional information about the Special Litigation Section of the Civil Rights Division's enforcement of the ADA's integration mandate is available here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/rights-persons-disabilities>, and information specific to the Civil Rights Division's Police Reform Work can be found here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/conduct-law-enforcement-agencies>.