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Windsor police apply for state grant to support co-responder program, trauma counseling



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Windsor police hope grant funds will allow them to support and expand mental health programs in the community and for its officers.

The grant funding would come from a state program that allocated \$3 million to support behavioral health and law enforcement partnerships for internal and external programs, Administrative Commander Aaron Lopez said. The department applied for two grants:

- \$256,000 to expand the department's co-responder program
- \$37,000 to continue providing trauma counseling and support to officers and other department staff

Lopez said they hope to hear back about if they've received funding by the spring.

Co-response need 'rising tremendously'

Windsor police is part of a co-responder program partnership with North Range Behavioral Health along with police departments in Severance, Eaton, Ault and Nunn, Lopez said. That partnership launched at the end of 2021.

One co-responder serves these five communities, Lopez said.

There were 104 calls for co-response in November, Lopez said, and the police departments only expect the demand for service to increase as the population grows and more awareness is brought to mental health and how to appropriately address behavioral health issues.

"The need for this has been rising tremendously," Lopez said. "... We'd like to provide more broad services."

If approved, the grant would fund two additional co-responders, including their equipment, vehicles and training, Lopez said.

Trauma counseling supports staff in 'difficulty or loss'

Windsor police have offered officers and department staff trauma counseling and behavioral health support through Fort Collins-based First Responder Trauma Counselors for years, Lopez said, to "help provide support for officers in times of difficulty or loss."

The resource has been especially beneficial for staff this year after the department lost an officer to COVID-19 last fall.

"Folks had a difficult time," Lopez said.

Officers and other staff, including records department staff and 911 dispatchers, experience significantly more trauma than an average person, Lopez said. The support from trained trauma counselors makes it "so they can continue doing well personally and professionally," he said.

If grant funds are awarded for this, it would fund the department's partnership with First Responder Trauma Counselors for another year, Lopez said.

Peer support: Who's helping first responders with their mental health amid COVID-19? Their peers.

Sady Swanson covers public safety, criminal justice, Larimer County government and more throughout Northern Colorado. You can send your story ideas to her at sswanson@coloradoan.com or on Twitter at [@sadyswan](https://twitter.com/sadyswan). Support her work and that of other Coloradoan journalists by purchasing a digital subscription today.