



VISALIA, CA - The Visalia Police Department and Tulare County Mental Health are excited to announce the launch of a pilot partnership that focuses on identifying and providing outreach and immediate services to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Visalia Police Department's Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (H.O.P.E.) Team is a four-officer team that focuses on homeless issues throughout Visalia. The Police Department is dedicating one H.O.P.E. officer to work side-by-side with a Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency Mental Health liaison as a response team to engage individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and may be eligible for mental health services, alcohol and drug programs, and veteran and self-sufficiency services, beginning Wednesday, October 10. Visalia Police Department Chief Jason Salazar says, "We are very excited about this pilot partnership with Tulare County Mental Health and the opportunities it will provide by putting vital resources on the front line of our efforts to better address this important community issue."

The partnership between the Visalia Police Department and Tulare County Mental Health will allow the team direct access to this population and enable the team to arrange for immediate assistance to individuals in need of services. In addition to mental health service identification, this team will be tasked to engage in conversations, build rapport, offer resources that address mental health needs, and assess the physical and economic needs of the individuals contacted. This integrated model of multidisciplinary teams includes clinical experts, alcohol and drug specialists, self-sufficiency staff, and veterans services representatives, who will work together to provide a holistic approach to services.

"The Tulare County Mental Health Branch of HHSA is fortunate to have the opportunity to partner directly with the Visalia Police Department's Hope Team," says Tulare County HHSA Mental Health Director, Dr. Timothy Durick. "The partnership will permit us to strengthen our presence in the community with the goal of connecting individuals to needed services and we look forward to successfully engaging with those that will benefit from our service programs."

The Visalia Police Department and Tulare County Mental Health's goal for this endeavor is to connect individuals to services and ensure that services are provided in a culturally competent and professional manner. The pilot program is expected to run two days a week for 18 months and may be extended, based on its results.