

I am Marilyn Kresky-Wolff, a retired social worker with a master's in public health. I have co-founded and directed programs for people in psychiatric crisis and their families, and for people who are homeless in Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and D.C.

I advocate for increased presence and leadership of mental health professionals in mental health crisis response, and for eliminating police as first responders in these situations. Both Baltimore and D.C. have mental health professional led crisis teams with coverage way beyond what Montgomery County provides.

There have been significant recent steps in our county:

- Last year the Council passed Council Chairman Hucker's special allocation of \$600,000 to add mental health professionals to the Mobile Crisis Teams
- The County Executive appointed a Task Force on Police Accountability which recently released a report reflecting advocates' input
- The Executive's proposed budget has funds for the Crisis Center to increase capacity from one team to six and to bring consultants from the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon to advise on developing a similar model here.

Meanwhile, violence and tragedy continue: we have witnessed the recent deaths of two more men who were killed by police, in one case by police responding to a man in a clear mental health crisis.

We have a way to go. The steps outlined below would move towards advocates' continued recommendations for:

A licensed mental health practitioner team model, not a police-driven model  
Presence in all six police districts 24/7  
Representation of impacted communities in advisory groups  
An information campaign on reaching the Mobile Crisis Teams through 911  
Reallocation of cost savings from the Police Department to fund this program  
Transparency in public access to Mental Health and Police data

Major work and continued increases in funding are desperately needed for implementation of a model 24/7 countywide. Tragedies must increase our sense of urgency.