

**Mental Health Crisis Response  
Working Group  
Final Report and Recommendations  
September 2021**

*Submitted by Dr. Juliette Landphair, Vice President for Student Affairs; and Dr. Tev Zukor, Director of Talley Center for Counseling Services*

**Overview**

During the summer of 2021, a committee called the Mental Health Crisis Response Working Group consisting of students and staff members met several times to review the following charge from President Troy Paino as recommended in the [Action Steps to Reform Policing at UMW, University Response to the UMW Community Advisory Panel \(CAP\) Final Report](#):

**Restructure mental health crisis response.** I will ask Dr. Juliette Landphair, Vice President for Student Affairs; and Dr. Tev Zukor, Director of the Talley Center for Counseling Services, to form a working group that includes University Police, those on staff responsible for mental health crisis response, and interested students, to develop a timeline and plan for reform that might include:

- 24/7 availability of clinical professionals for student support
- Changes in UMW Police protocols during a mental health crisis
- More Residence Life staff training and communication responsibilities to proactively inform students about student support options

The Working Group consisted of three full-time students and eight staff members, including two certified UMW Police officers (see list of members below in Appendix B). We reviewed policies, protocols, and practices from Residence Life and Housing, UMW Police, and the Talley Center for Counseling Services. We analyzed and talked about campus survey data related to UMW Policing. We had substantive discussions about UMW student experiences and best practices in mental health crisis response.

**Context for Our Work**

Over the course of the 2020-21 academic year, the presidentially-appointed [UMW Police Community Advisory Panel](#) met and discussed wide-ranging topics that included policies and protocols involving UMW police and after-hours mental health crisis response. The CAP [final report](#) affirmed an opinion shared across the University, including among UMW Police officers: in mental health crisis response situations on campus, mental health clinicians should serve as the primary responders, with law enforcement in a supporting role. The CAP report led to a recommendation from University of Mary Washington (UMW) President Troy Paino in the [University's Response to the CAP Final Report](#) to establish “a working group that includes University Police, those on staff responsible for mental health, and interested students, to develop a timeline and plan for reform” in the area of mental health crisis response.

**Data About UMW Policing and Mental Health Crisis Response**

Understanding that after-hours mental health crisis response in the residence halls was a critical area of focus, we considered the actual data about crisis calls and transports from **2016-2021**

involving UMW Police. This data reveals that it is relatively uncommon for UMW Police to be called to assist students in crisis in residence halls.

- **Forty** mental health transports to the hospital by UMW Police (*please note*: unless the student presents a safety risk, the student is not placed in handcuffs as is described in [University Police Community Advisory Panel](#) Final Report). Most of these transports happened straight from the Talley Center to the hospital, and the student in crisis went voluntarily.
- **Three** Emergency Custody Orders (ECO); two of the calls were in April 2021 during regular business hours.
- **Twenty-seven** mental health crisis calls, all but six received after 5 p.m..

**Our work resulted in these five recommendations:**

- 1) **The University contract with a clinical support services provider to allow for student access to clinical evaluations after hours and during the weekends when the Talley Center is unavailable.** An example of this service, utilized successfully by several Virginia public colleges and universities, is [ProtoCall](#). These services provide 24/7 access to clinical evaluation and partner with institutions to understand where support is most needed. With this service, students experiencing mental health situations after-hours or over the weekend would have an opportunity to speak with a trained clinician to ensure the best outcome while reducing the decision-making role of UMW Police during after-hours crisis response.
- 2) **Hire a UMW case manager whose responsibilities would include follow up of students referred to off-campus providers.** The Talley Center will sometimes refer students off campus for counseling. Currently, there is no protocol for following up with those students to confirm that they adhered to this referral. This follow-up would best be incorporated into the responsibilities of a case manager, who would be responsible for tracking student concerns in several areas. [Case management](#) has become a higher education best practice.
- 3) **List trainings on the UMW Police website.** Many students and UMW community members are unaware of the extensive trainings undergone annually by UMW Police officers. For instance, every UMW officer has completed [crisis intervention training](#). This recommendation complements recommendation #4 on the [University's Response to the CAP Final Report](#); that recommendation is that UMW “create a more transparent system of information sharing” on the UMW Police website. Here is an [example](#) from Notre Dame.
- 4) **Incorporation of Ongoing Programming and Support for Resident Assistants.** Feedback from Resident Assistants (RAs) reflects that preparing for and responding to mental health crises and their aftermath can affect their own wellbeing. Before the academic year begins, RAs receive extensive training about crisis response called Mental Health First Aid training. In addition to this training, we recommend that Residence Life and Housing partner with other UMW offices (e.g., the Dean of Student Life, Campus

Recreation, the Talley Center) to offer programs during the year in support of RA mental health and wellness. These programs might include professional development and team-building opportunities.

- 5) **Mental Health Response Training for the UMW Community.** The Working Group recommends mandatory [“gatekeeper” training](#) for UMW faculty, staff, and students to provide them with the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of suicidal ideation and other mental health distress so that they can make referrals. Compared to other public universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, UMW has a disproportionate number of students with mental health challenges; this number grew during the pandemic. The pandemic has also demonstrated that issues related to mental health and wellbeing are not limited to students. This suggests that wellness planning is a community priority and should be approached holistically and comprehensively to include all students, faculty, and staff as both responders and participants.

### **Further Considerations**

**Affirmation of Recommendations in the [University Response](#) to the CAP Final Report.** The Working Group would also like to affirm recommendations #6 and #7 in the University Response to the CAP Final Report: to create more opportunities for UMW Police to build relationships with UMW community members and to integrate UMW Police more intentionally in the University’s efforts towards inclusive excellence. The community policing philosophy espoused by UMW Police intersects well with the University’s inclusive excellence goals, and we look forward to seeing the new and ongoing partnerships between and among UMW Police, the James Farmer Multicultural Center, the Chief Diversity Officer’s office, Student Activities and Engagement (SAE), the Title IX office, Academic Services and Support, Residence Life and Housing, the University Faculty Council (UFC), the University Staff Council (USC), Human Resources, and other UMW areas for which our academic mission, inclusion, and safety intersect.

**Police Uniforms.** The Working Group spent much time discussing student input regarding police uniforms, particularly full-dress “Class A” uniforms. As the [University Police Community Advisory Panel](#) Final Report mentions, when UMW Police “present themselves in full uniform, carrying a lethal weapon,” it “may elevate the anxiety and fear of a student already in crisis.” Other students report that seeing police officers in uniform is reassuring, especially in calls involving people or situations that are threatening to the community. While the Working Group decided not to make a recommendation regarding uniforms, we agree that varying opinions and interpretations underline the continuing significance of building trust between UMW police officers and the community, as outlined in the [University Response](#) to the UMW CAP Panel report.

### **Appendix A: Vice President for Student Affairs Message about the Working Group’s Formation.**

[A message from the Vice President for Student Affairs](#)

June 24, 2021

Dear UMW Community,

On May 13, 2021, President Paino released his [response](#) to the report and recommendations of the [UMW Police Advisory Committee](#), which met throughout the 2020-21 academic year.

Dr. Paino's recommendations included an evaluation of the University's mental health crisis response. Here is the specific recommendation:

*Restructure mental health crisis response. Dr. Juliette Landphair, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Dr. Tev Zukor, Director of the Talley Counseling Center, will form a working group that includes University Police, those on staff responsible for mental health crisis response, and interested students, to develop a timeline and plan for reform that might include:*

- *24/7 availability of clinical professionals for student support*
- *Changes in UMW Police protocols during a mental health crisis*
- *More Residence Life staff training and communication responsibilities to proactively inform students about student support options*

The working group has been established and includes the members below. In addition to gathering feedback from the community, we will be reviewing relevant data, including Campus Police Surveys, and University policies and protocols around crisis response.

We look forward to reporting out the results of our work in the fall. In the meantime, do not hesitate to email [me](#) or [Dr. Zukor](#) with any questions or insights.

Sincerely,

Juliette Landphair, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Student Affairs

## **Appendix B: Members of the Mental Health Crisis Response Working Group**

The Mental Health Crisis Response Working Group  
Summer 2021

### **Co-Chairs**

- Dr. Juliette Landphair, VP for Student Affairs
- Dr. Tev Zukor, Director of Talley Center

### **Members**

- Megan Brown, Area Coordinator Residence Life and Housing
- Alexandra Diviney, Class of 2022
- Lt. Bill Gill, UMW Police
- Vivian Hyatt, Class of 2022
- Sgt. Tegan Lewis, UMW Police
- Marissa Miller, Associated Coordinator Judicial Affairs
- Chris Porter, Director of Transfer and Off-Campus Student Services
- Cedric Rucker, Associate VP and Dean of Student Life
- Lueden Sheikhnureldin, Class of 2022

## Appendix C: Relevant Excerpts from the UMW Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Final Report and Recommendations.

### Relevant Excerpts from the [UMW Police Community Advisory Panel \(CAP\) Final Report and Recommendations](#)

(page 7): There is agreement that reforming the University's mental health crisis response protocols is needed to require that mental health clinicians are (i) available to students 24/7 and (ii) are the primary responders in a mental health crisis, while using Campus Police in a supporting role.

(page 8): *Recommendation*: Restructure mental health crisis response to ensure that mental health clinicians are the primary responders and the Campus Police are in a supporting role in a mental health crisis.

(pages 25-26): *Mental Health Crisis Response*. Reforming mental health crisis response policies and procedures is an issue of common interest and agreement among the Campus Community and Campus Police. Both support using a mental health professional as the first to respond to a person experiencing a mental health crisis, not a Campus Police officer. As one Campus Survey student commenter stated: "I would call these police if someone stole my bike, and I trust they would intervene in a situation of danger. I would never call them for a mental health concern or, without other support, for a crime with a traumatized victim" (Campus Survey: Staff Comment). From the student perspective, the concern is multifaceted: (i) the perception is that Campus Police, as law enforcement professionals, are not adequately trained to respond to a mental health crisis (though all the officers have completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training); (ii) Campus Police present themselves in full uniform, carrying a lethal weapon, which may elevate the anxiety and fear of a student already in crisis; and (iii) when Campus Police provide hospital transport, a student in crisis is placed in handcuffs and transported in a marked vehicle, adding to the stigma associated with mental health challenges. As one student noted: "One time I had a really bad panic attack late at night—I alerted my RA, and apparently the protocol is to call UMW PD. The individual officer was really nice, but I hated that that was the process. Having the police involved made me more anxious than I already was (it felt like I might get in trouble), and I could definitely see how their presence could escalate situations worse than mine." (Campus Survey: Student Comment). Dr. Zukor also expressed interest in developing an alternative paradigm for mental health crisis response at the University using a mental health professional as the primary responder, with Campus Police involved as a backup (personal communication, October 29, 2020). Developing this model would require that a clinician is available 24/7 (currently clinicians are not available after hours or on weekends) and likely additional training for Campus Police. In addition to developing a new crisis response model, Dr. Zukor would like students to have 24/7 access to counseling support. Dr. Zukor identified PROTOCALL as a potential service provider. The UMW NAACP report also identifies a possible solution for 24/7 crisis counseling: implementing a program similar to the Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) program in Eugene, Oregon. Given the consensus for reform, CAP urges the administration to formulate a plan for change that addresses the concerns and needs of the Campus Community.

(page 26): *Recommendation:* Respondents generally agree that the University's mental health crisis response protocols should be reformed to elevate the role of mental health clinicians while using Campus Police in a supporting role.