



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:** Nov. 4, 2020

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### **DBHIDS Trauma Resources in the Wake of the Death of Walter Wallace Jr.**

**Nov. 3, 2020, PHILADELPHIA** — The City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) shares in the sadness and grief that has swept our city. We stand in solidarity with those directly and indirectly impacted by systemic racism, injustice, and all the resulting trauma. We firmly believe that mental illness, disabilities, and substance use disorder are not crimes. Individuals affected by these challenges have the right to treatment, recovery, wellness, and life.

In order to meet our stated mission of educating, strengthening, and serving individuals and communities so all Philadelphians can thrive, DBHIDS partners with multiple public and private entities such as schools, city agencies, child welfare, housing, employment, and justice partners, including the police department, as well as a network of more than 200 community-based providers that offer prevention, intervention, and 24/7 crisis services.

DBHIDS' efforts to reduce stigma and increase behavioral health awareness within the public safety and criminal justice systems reach back for many years and include bi-weekly collaborative leadership meetings; criminal justice and social services interaction as part of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board; and, in 2013, the launch of our Behavioral Health and Justice Related Services division.

Furthermore, since 2007 DBHIDS has provided Crisis Intervention Training to the Philadelphia Police Department. As of Oct. 26, 2020, more than 3,000 officers received this life-saving training that emphasizes violence prevention, de-escalation, and community collaboration. In early November, the police department and DBHIDS will begin a modified CIT training class for 911 call takers and dispatchers. This class will provide dispatchers with better ability to identify crisis-related calls so we can more efficiently direct these calls to CIT-trained officers in the field.

In 2017, DBHIDS collaborated with law enforcement in the launch of several Police Assisted Diversion (PAD) programs that take a health-centered approach to law enforcement, diverting individuals away from incarceration and toward supportive, peer-based social services that are customized to meet the participants' needs. Due to the program's success, steps were already taken toward expansion that should happen later this month.

More recently, DBHIDS worked within the PAD program to launch a co-responder outreach pilot program that embeds behavioral health professionals with police officers to respond

in tandem and proactively connect individuals with complex unmet health needs to harm-reduction services. This pilot program is also scheduled to be expanded this month.

And last month, DBHIDS partnered with the police department to launch another pilot program, embedding a behavioral health navigator in the police 911 radio room. Since late September, a DBHIDS behavioral health navigator has sat with staff to learn about the types of calls received. During the current phase of the pilot program, the navigator is gathering information to refine the model, determine the amount and type of support needed, help prepare a script to support identification of behavioral health issues, and assist in development of a curriculum for training.

By early 2021, the program is expected to move to a second phase of the pilot which will include dispatch of co-response teams.

There also is an existing protocol between the police department's 911 radio room and the 24/7 Philadelphia Crisis Line (PCL) at DBHIDS. When callers express suicidal ideation, 911 dispatches an officer to the caller's location and immediately connects to the PCL to support de-escalation and, when necessary, dispatch a mobile crisis team.

The existing mobile crisis teams are operationalized by two providers: The Consortium and the John F. Kennedy Behavioral Center. These teams allow DBHIDS to further connections with and between the community and the police department. We are committed to these teams and to further evolve these relationships.

It is our deepest hope that initiatives such as these and others undertaken by the City of Philadelphia as a whole, result in more individuals receiving the care they need and fewer tragedies such as the death of Walter Wallace Jr.

At present, DBHIDS is working within the community to try to help those most affected by this traumatic event. Our Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence coalition is actively coordinating with community members within West Philadelphia who have reached out for support and assistance. We will continue conversations with these community points of contact in order to address the impact of this incident on individuals and communities.

Sadly, the trauma is ongoing -- for the people living in this community, for the individuals suffering under the weight of systemic racism, and for those who are today seeing the police camera footage.

To all those individuals -- and those otherwise facing the trauma of COVID-19, isolation, financial stress, and more -- we want to assure you that you are not alone; help is here.

To learn about the services available to you, please visit [HealthyMindsPhilly.com](https://www.healthy minds philly.com) or [MindPHLtogether.com](https://www.mindphltogether.com) to learn about the services available to you, or call our Community Behavioral Health division at 888-545-2600.

If you feel like you are at risk of harming yourself or others, please contact the Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255 or dial 911 immediately. Philadelphia residents can contact the Philadelphia Crisis Line at 215-685-6440.

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### **About DBHIDS**

The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, part of the City of Philadelphia's Department of Health and Human Services, offers behavioral health care, intellectual disability supports and early intervention services in one comprehensive integrated system. For more information about DBHIDS, visit [DBHIDS.org](http://DBHIDS.org)