



# SAN RAMON VALLEY

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
SAN RAMON POLICE DEPARTMENT



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## **San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District Implements Behavioral Health Firefighter First Program**

In 2021, the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District (District) recognized the need to change how we receive, respond to, and transport behavioral health emergencies. This need for change was highlighted by not only what was happening at a local and national level, but also by our own personnel who led from the ground up and advocated for a better approach to these types of emergencies. The District developed an innovative program that is the first of its kind to recognize behavioral health incidents as medical emergencies which allows Fire/EMS resources to respond to these incidents within seven (7) minutes.

*"Given the increase in mental health calls and the strain on the EMS system it was important to develop a proactive solution that addressed the needs of the individual patients as well as the needs of the community."*  
– Fire Chief Paige Meyer

The implementation of this all-encompassing Behavioral Health Response Program consisted of three (3) phases:

1. Phase 1 – Organizational Mapping and Mental Health Specialist Training
2. Phase 2 – 911 Warm Hand Off to 988 Crisis Center
3. Phase 3 – Firefighter First Response

The first phase of this project consisted of organizational mapping to increase awareness in first responders in recognizing behavioral health crises through training. Mental Health Specialist Training that highlighted de-escalation techniques was provided for over 200 District personnel and San Ramon Police Department (SRPD) staff.

In July 2022, the new 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline was activated nationwide. Two months later in September, California AB-988 The Miles Hall Lifeline and Suicide Prevention Act, authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, was signed into law.

*"I want to thank the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District and the San Ramon Police Department for their critical leadership in mental health response. This program will save lives and our community is lucky to have local first responders who are collaborating to treat the mental health crisis as the health care crisis it is. I am proud to have sponsored the legislation that will fund this type of work in the future, and grateful we are already seeing this bold change in action here in our community."* – Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Representing the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

The second phase focused on enhancing 911 triage for behavioral health emergencies, with the goal of providing the appropriate level of care to patients. The San Ramon Valley 911 Communications Center (SRV 911) has partnered with the Contra Costa Crisis Center, the region's 988 crisis hotline provider, to transform behavioral health crisis response.



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*"As an accredited emergency medical dispatch center, it was immediately clear that the need to change the triage process for mental health callers would have a significant positive impact on people's lives." – Director Denise Pangelinan, SRV 911*

As of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 911 calls to SRV 911 within the City of San Ramon that do not involve life threatening emergencies or threats to public safety will receive a warm transfer to the Contra Costa Crisis Center. The Contra Costa Crisis Center will provide telephonic crisis intervention-suicide prevention services and as needed referral-linkage to in person services.

On Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, the Firefighter First Response phase of the Behavioral Health Response Program was initiated for incidents in the City of San Ramon. A Firefighter First Response can occur when an incident does not involve immediate danger to the patient or others. During a Firefighter First Response, District personnel will initiate patient contact with SRPD staged as a secondary responder nearby. The primary goal of Firefighter First Response is to recognize a patient in a behavioral health crisis and apply de-escalation techniques. In preparation of Phase 3, simulation-based training with crisis actors from the National Alliance for Mental Illness Contra Costa County (NAMI Contra Costa) was provided to District line personnel. Additional training was also provided to SRPD staff and SRV 911 dispatchers.

*"If every Fire District in our county and beyond followed the lead of San Ramon individuals and their families who are impacted by mental illness would sleep easier. San Ramon clearly understands the importance of treating those experiencing a mental health emergency with medical care and not criminalizing them. San Ramon's Fire District is setting the tone for the future with this more progressive approach that meets people where they are at." – Executive Director GiGi Crowder, NAMI Contra Costa*

The Behavioral Health Response Program is designed to provide the right care at the right time. We are confident that doing so will result in the following benefits:

- Improved 911 caller experience,
- Improved patient outcomes, and
- Improved system-wide efficiency.

*"As a community-focused law enforcement organization, we aim to provide the highest service with the utmost professionalism to all City of San Ramon community members. Supporting and collaborating with the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District on this Behavioral Health Firefighter First Response Program has been outstanding. We are incredibly excited to see this program come to fruition because of the level of care San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District personnel will provide to the community members we are dedicated to serving." – Police Chief Denton Carlson*

SRVFPD would like to extend our gratitude to our partners throughout this program development including the SRPD, Contra Costa Crisis Center, and NAMI Contra Costa. This project was supported through grant funding from Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services (BHJIS) and the CARESTAR Foundation.