



Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Emergency Communications Center



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CUA911 Increases Mental Health Support with New Behavioral Health Specialist, Urging Community-Wide Recognition on World Mental Health Day

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – October 9, 2025 – In a critical step to enhance community well-being and address the escalating mental health needs within the community, CUA911 proudly announces the addition of a dedicated Behavioral Health Specialist to its team, effective this month. This vital new role, funded by grants from both the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, underscores CUA911's unwavering commitment to supporting the mental well-being of its residents, especially in times of crisis.

"Stress is something we all experience in life, but that is especially true when you pick up the phone to dial 911," said CUA911 Executive Director Heather Hilliard. "CUA911 recognizes the external needs of our community in emergencies, and this new specialist is a direct response to that. This isn't just about responding to emergencies; it's about building a stronger, more resilient community where mental health is prioritized."

"We are grateful for the investment of city and county leaders in this position. Supporting and strengthening our community is a team effort, and it's through these strong partnerships that we can collectively provide essential support to our local residents."

Established in 1992, World Health Day serves as a vital platform for global mental health education, awareness, and advocacy. According to the World Health Organization, nearly all individuals affected by emergencies experience psychological distress, which, while often improving over time, can exacerbate existing mental health conditions or contribute to new challenges such as family conflict or substance abuse. Supporting mental well-being during such crises is not merely important; it saves lives, empowers individuals to cope, and fosters healing and recovery for both individuals and communities.

After specialized 911 training, the new licensed professional will work collaboratively with vulnerable callers, partnering with regional police agencies and alternative medical responders, such as ANCHOR and HART. This strategic integration ensures that the right support is offered at the right time, alleviating the immediate need for police intervention when a mental health professional is truly what's required.

"We will continue to improve how we support one another and help each other be stronger," notes Hilliard. "World Mental Health Day serves as a powerful reminder that there is no health without mental health. With the addition of this new team member, we can focus more specifically on these kinds of emergencies while the police handle calls in their expertise and medical teams respond where they can best serve the community."

While Friday marks a day of recognition, CUA911 emphasizes that every call, every day, is treated with urgency, empathy, and compassion.

About CUA911

The Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle Emergency Communications Center (CUA911) is one of Virginia's first consolidated Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), established in 1984. It serves a population of 167,280 across 736.17 square miles. CUA911 handles all 9-1-1 emergency and non-emergency calls for the region, acting as the central dispatch for local police departments, rescue squads, and fire services. Annually, the ECC receives approximately 238,000 9-1-1 and administrative calls, as well as 181,000 calls for service. CUA911 is a CALEA-accredited communications center, answering over 90% of 9-1-1 calls in ten seconds or less. To learn more, please visit cua911.gov.