

Real solutions to real problems: How the Chatham County Fire Department's Behavioral Health Unit is making a difference in Chatham County.



When the Chatham County Fire Department transitioned from Chatham Emergency Services to a county department on July 1, 2024, one of the many priorities was the implementation of the Behavioral Health Unit. The goal is simple yet profound and is netting results! The unit looks to bridge the gap in access to care in Chatham County to meet the needs of citizens and transform traditional healthcare services. How do we do it? The team responds to individuals who have ongoing, unmet medical, mental health and substance use needs as well as individuals who engage in frequent utilization of the 911 system. In doing so, the BHU is committed to providing patients with resources to achieve the quality of life they deserve.



The team, led by Medical Services Director ***Lydia McCrary***, who has been in Fire and EMS in Savannah, GA since 2006. Previously, she has served as Deputy Chief of EMS. She serves on several boards locally and regionally addressing emergency preparedness, community access to care/resources, homelessness, resiliency and mental health. She has dedicated her career to improving community response. Lydia has earned a bachelor's in psychology and a Master's in Health Science.

The unit has two Community Paramedics, ***Coleen Robertson and Khyle Shervington***. Combined, they have more than 24 years in EMS experience. Collaboration is an integral party of the success of the unit. The Chatham Fire BHU works closely with the Chatham County Police Department, the Savannah Police Department, the Behavioral Crisis Center and Jail Diversion Program.



Corporal Hiram Rivera of the Chatham County Police Department is now working closely with the Chatham Fire BHU. This comprehensive approach is about connecting patients to the right resources at the right time. Those resources include: Crisis de-escalation, resiliency, suicide intervention, trauma informed response, crisis intervention, durable medical equipment, counseling, substance abuse resources, mental health resources, housing and food insecurity. In turn, by providing these resources to those in need, it helps to reduce unnecessary emergency room admissions and EMS transports.

The BHU is a diverse integrated healthcare model providing services to those in the community that can be oftentimes an underserved population. This team collaborates with physicians and the Behavioral Health Center frequently, they provide advanced life support and medical assessments on site. If you or someone you know need help now, or would like more information

about the Behavioral Health Unit, don't hesitate to reach out to our team. *It can be the best decision you make for yourself or someone you love!*

If you would like to make a referral to one of our Community Paramedics, please visit <https://reach.julota.com/eturl/b117b29d2328f856>

