



## **CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS**

**ALBANY, NY:** [Albany County starts mental health court diversion program](#): Albany County is starting its first mental health court, five years after County Executive Dan McCoy first proposed one. McCoy said it would help prevent "the criminalization of mental illness." "This initiative will be able to divert low-level, non-violent offenders away from incarceration and into the treatment they need," he said. The program will open to 15 defendants who are charged with non-violent misdemeanors. Once they are arraigned, the court will look at criteria to determine if a defendant is eligible for diversion to the mental health court. The determination will be made between social workers, prosecutors, the defendant's attorney and City Court Judge John Reilly, who is overseeing the program.

**OAKLAND, CA:** [Oakland moves to put fire department in charge of mental health response calls, not police](#): When someone has a mental health crisis in Oakland, chances are good in the near future that police officers won't be showing up to try to calm them down. The City Council this week unanimously signaled that it wants the fire department to handle mental health crises and other non-crime calls by sending out paramedics and counselors. Although residents of Oakland and other cities have long discussed the benefit of dispatching special teams of civilians to deescalate tense situations, the idea picked up momentum in the wake of high-profile police killings of Black Americans and other people of color.

**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VA:** [Prince William County Launches Co-Responder Program](#): The Prince William Board of County Supervisors approved funding in the FY2021 budget to support a Co-Responder Program. The Program began in November 2020 and is a joint collaborative effort between the Police Department and Community Services. It consists of three police officers, three clinicians from Community Services, one clinical supervisor and one police lieutenant. Through consultation with other Co-Responder Programs across the nation and the local National Alliance on Mental Illness, it was discovered that the model that best fit the needs of Prince William County is the "embedded model." This model pairs a master's level mental health clinician with a crisis intervention trained police officer in a marked police cruiser.

## **NATIONAL**

### [4 veterans issues House leaders want to tackle in the new Congress](#)

The leaders of the House Veterans Affairs Committee are facing a number of challenges in the year ahead, when they will try to set new priorities for addressing a department riddled with years of leadership challenges. In separate interviews, Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., and ranking member Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., said they were looking forward to working with newly confirmed VA Secretary Denis McDonough on issues including the treatment of women



veterans, the vulnerability of veterans in cyberspace, and the way VA health facilities, especially state veterans' homes, have handled COVID-19.

- Tackling sexual misconduct
- Violent extremism among veterans
- COVID at veterans' nursing homes
- Curbing suicide among veterans

## **WEEKEND READING**

**ABC News:** Rise in anti-Asian American hate crimes may lead to mental health crisis

**The Washington Post:** How mental health is colliding with COVID-19 for veterans

**Bloomberg:** Two Firms Lost Billions Over Opioids. CEOs Got Bonuses Anyway.

**The UN News:** Mental health alert for 332 million children linked to COVID-19 lockdown policies: UNICEF

**The Psych Congress:** Addressing Technology Burnout in Mental Health Clinicians

**\*\*The information compiled in this email originated from the following news sources: PBS, Times Union, Prince William County News, The Mercury News,\*\***