



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

Vasco A. Smith, Jr., Administration Building
11th Floor, 160 North Main, Memphis, Tennessee 38103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Frankie Dakin
Press Secretary
Office: 901.222.2057
Mobile: 901.496.0131

SHELBY COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT BEGINS DIRECT TRANSPORT TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE

County hopes this first-of-its-kind program will reduce burden on emergency rooms.

Shelby County, TN – Today, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris announces a major mental health care reform for Shelby County Government. Shelby County Fire Department paramedics will now have the ability to transport adults experiencing a mental health crisis to Alliance Healthcare Services, a mental healthcare provider. Mayor Harris' proposal received bi-partisan support in the April 26, 2021 Shelby County Commission meeting.

The effort is a part of a 2021 slate of mental health reforms proposed by Mayor Harris' administration. This most recent reform allows Shelby County Fire paramedics to transport individuals to mental health care, instead of an emergency room. In addition, earlier this year, all Shelby County Fire Dispatchers completed nationally recognized training to ascertain the right information to help first responders as they respond to mental health crises. The Fire Department also adopted a new standard operating procedure that allows for EMS personnel to provide voluntary direct transport to mental health services.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: “Until now, our options for transporting adults who call 9-1-1 when experiencing a mental health emergency have been limited to the emergency room. This new program will provide an additional tool in our paramedics' toolkit, improve access to mental health care, and help get our first responders back on the street in a timely manner.”

Shelby County Fire Chief Alvin Benson: “This new program will empower our first responders with an additional resource to help citizens get to the services that they need. The Shelby County



Fire Department is always willing to adopt new practices, train, and do what we can to ensure the very best outcome when someone calls 9-1-1.”

Mayor Lee Harris is available to talk by phone regarding the 2021 mental health reforms slate.

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