

Minutes: May 31, 2023 Meeting

In Attendance: Daela, Alex, Ilana, & Alex

Special Guest: Amanda McNab, MCOT employee, Licensed Social Worker – here to answer questions about how MCOT responds to mental health crisis in the city and their relationship to police department.

This week's meeting was devoted to Amanda McNab, an MCOT employee, who attended to answer our questions about how the mental health crisis unit (MCOT) works with police and where improvements can be made. Because this took up the entire 60 minutes, I will summarize her answers to our questions below. In addition, you can find this same exact summary, and her answers to Ilana's [initial questions here](#).

Beneath the summary of Amanda's comment you'll find **Daela "homework"**: a short summary of what the Salt Lake City PD's "Commission on Racial Equity Committee" is up to. In short, it seems like the committee has been formed, of various stakeholders appointed by the SLC mayor, and their doing now what we're doing: coming with a list of recommendations to deliver to the mayor and SLC city council for policing reforms.

Summary of Zoom Meeting with Amanda McNab, MCOT Rep, from May 31, 2023 Meeting

- Amanda emphasized that **MCOT** would like the local police departments to **utilize them more**—that is, consistently call MCOT when they encounter someone experiencing what might be mental health crisis on the streets. At present, she noted, police (all in the area) call them in “ebbs and flows”—based on the officers that like to use them and those that don't. (***“We're not being utilized as much as we could be.”-Amanda McNab***)
- Noted that the major reasons police don't call MCOT more often is because MCOT cannot get to where they need to be quickly enough, with response times sometimes being 30-45 minutes. This is a **resource issue**—don't have the funds to invest more units spread out across the value.
- Related, emphasized the **lack of personnel—underfunded—nature of MCOT**. MCOT is basically has 2 people (a “team”) that, and enough teams to cover the entire week, 24/7. There are about four teams—so 8 social workers—total to service the entire county. She does not believe the pay is the issue—social workers for MCOT are actually paid comparably, she suggested, to other social workers. The exception is team members who are not licenced social workers are not paid well enough. All funding for MCOT comes through the U of U Health System, though currently the one UPD social worker embedded with the UPD is a contracted UPD officer (and that person does more after-the-fact check-ups, rather than emergency response).
- She emphasized that she would like cities to **use MCOT more as the first responders**, and let their personnel decide if *they* need police as back-up. They occasionally do call police to accompany them if they think the situation warrants it; and some things they

don't believe they can handle, and therefore call police instead of sending out their own personnel.

- She said that while the “embedded” social workers are a good thing, as is special training for police officers on how to deal with mental health, MCOT prefers that licensed professionals, like themselves, do this work. MCOT does work well with “embedded” social workers in police officers—in fact, she noted, the **one social worker currently hired by the UPD is an MCOT social worker that is contracted out to the UPD.**
- She also suggested that relying on “volunteers” to be mental health responders is likely not a good idea—it’s a professional job that needs trained professionals.

Email Message from Daela Taeoalii-Higgs, on state of SLC Commission on Racial Equity in Policing:

I've added the 2022 Annual Salt Lake City Racial Equity in Policing Commission Report to our shared folder of documents. My task was to explore what Salt Lake City is doing in terms of policing policies and accountability by a diverse group of community members - not all from Salt Lake City proper.

In short more about their efforts here:

The Commission on Racial Equity in Policing was formed to examine SLCPD’s policies, culture, and budget and any City policies that influence SLCPD’s culture or policies. The Commission is composed of individuals who represent a broad and diverse range of communities of color, expertise, and viewpoints in Salt Lake City. The Commission’s former core committee members were selected by the Mayor and City Council to lead in the structure of the Commission, invite others to participate (supported by the selected facilitator) and to create the space for productive and inclusive discourse with the broad group of Commissioners and the diversity of opinions therein.

Today, as Phase 2 goes underway, the Commission is made up of a diverse 15-member group who have strong ties to Salt Lake City and is led by a Chair and Vice Chair. The Commission has formed three subcommittees on police training, policies and practices, and school safety. These subcommittees will create recommendations, informed by community input, that will be delivered to the Mayor and City Council for further action. Mayor’s Office staff will assist this Commission in its work, coordinate with City staff on commission-requested research and information, help produce a final work product, and advise the City communications team on how to convey information in a transparent and accountable way to the public throughout the process. More information is available about the Commission by calling (801) 535-7644, or emailing REPcommission@slcgov.com

Separately I explored what was going on with the Salt Lake City Police Foundation. It seems that their signature outreach event is weekend hoops - this seems to solve for officers not living in areas that they police.

Email from Amanda McNab, responding to Ilana Raskind’s initial questions on MCOT:

Hello [Ilana],

As Jenna indicated, my name is Amanda and I am the Quality Improvement and Training Manager for Community Crisis Intervention and Support Services. I oversee the education team for both internal staff, as well as community education in the area of crisis. Jenna sent me your questions and hopefully I can provide you with the information you are looking for.

1. I see on the Utah Crisis Services Data dashboard that police/dispatch is one source of referrals. Can you share more about what this referral process looks like? Does it mean that local law enforcement agencies call the Utah Crisis Line directly to notify them of a person who may be in crisis and in need of services?

More often than not, an officer will reach out through dispatch to request MCOT. However, officers are able to call directly as well. Most contact is through the Crisis Line, but we are working on creating a direct line to our MCOT dispatchers just for law enforcement. At this time, a call will come in to the Crisis Line and our crisis staff will ask for basic information of the individual such as name and date of birth, as well location and brief information about the concern. If officers will not be remaining on scene, we have additional questions in regards to safety we may ask. This information is then passed on to a crisis dispatcher/shift lead/supervisor who informs the team that a law enforcement request has been made. If we have someone in route to a community call, we will divert them to the LE call as they take priority. Our goal is to be able to respond within 30 minutes of initial contact. If no team is available, we may offer to meet with the individual via tele health or to follow up with them as soon as a team does become available if officers feel that the individual is safe enough to wait. We have also had times where we were able to provide support over the phone for someone that law enforcement had seen, but did not feel was in need of involuntary commitment, but still in need of support.

If MCOT is called for, should officers stay to transition to MCOT in an orderly way to make sure all pertinent data is passed on? The people will remain more peaceful.

2. I also see on the dashboard that ~3% of calls result in a collaboration with law enforcement? How is the decision made to involve law enforcement? Does collaboration mean that MCOT co-responds to the call with law enforcement?

In this case, we are referring to co-response. We try not to involve law enforcement unless absolutely necessary. Examples would include physically agitated/aggressive individuals, individuals with access to unsecured weapons, or individuals who may not know someone has called to request that the individual be evaluated. We may also call police in the event someone does need to be

involuntarily committed (pink sheet) to assist with transportation as our team cannot provide that.

3. We are also interested in learning more about current staffing, capacity, response times, and geographic coverage of MCOT's services.

Unfortunately we are not fully staffed at this time. MCOT works 3 or 4, 10 hour shifts and start times are staggered. We have two teams that work 8-6 Su through W (one team) and W through Sa (other team). Two teams that work 10-8 Su-W (one team) and W-Sa (the other team). One team that works 1-11, W-Sa. We have open spots for three teams to work 5p-3a, two Su-W and one W-Sa, as well as two openings for a 10p-8a, one on either side of the week. Again the goal is to have a dedicated team 24/7 on the grave shift. Right now at times that we do not have dedicated teams, we have staff from SafeUT, shift leads, or supervisors respond. Our department/teams cover the entirety of Salt Lake County. The goal for response times is less than 30 minutes for law enforcement and less than 60 minutes for other community calls. Our last analysis showed an average response time to law enforcement as 24 minutes and closer to 35 minutes for the rest of the community. Unfortunately I suspect this will be going up as the cases we are being called on are increasingly acute and complicated which means our teams are spending more time per encounter.

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I hope this information is helpful. You mentioned joining one of your meetings to provide further information. I would be happy to do so. Please let me know if any other questions arise.

Thank you,
Amanda McNab