

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**City of Duluth - Police Department**

Mike Tusken, Chief of Police  
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**DATE:** 12/15/2020

**SUBJECT:** Opioid Response Program to Expand Over Three Years

**BY:** Ingrid Hornibrook

**NATURE OF INCIDENT:** Community Engagement

**CASE NO.:**

**INCIDENT DATE:**

**INCIDENT TIME:**

**INCIDENT LOCATION:**

[DULUTH, MN] The Duluth Police Department recently received a grant for \$899,055, which will fund the creation of the Lake Superior Diversion and Substance Use Response Team over a three-year period. The thoughtful evolution of this team over the next three years will allow us to expand our focus to include methamphetamine, reduce delays in outreach and assessment, and provide services to a growing caseload.

“Our existing Opioid Response Technician, Jess Nickila, has done a tremendous job with outreach and advocacy for people who are suffering from the scourge of addiction. In her work, Jess lifts people up by giving them hope for a fresh start through her compassionate focus on saving lives and getting healthy,” said Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken. “To be able to expand the reach of the hard work she is doing, we will save and renew lives while at the same time limiting the demand for opioids in our community.”

“This grant will allow us to not only expand our current caseload to 20-30 more per year,” said Lieutenant Jeff Kazel, Commander of the Lake Superior Drug and Violent Crime Task Force, “but it also allows us to hire a Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor who will help us get people into treatment quicker.”

The addition of a Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor will provide immediate (within 24 business hours) assessment for treatment to all program participants, whether through police referral, self-referral, jail in-reach, or overdose outreach, regardless of residency or insurance.

The Duluth Police Department is committed to a three-pronged approach to solving the drug problem in our region. Our team will continue to work towards helping people by removing drugs from our streets through enforcement, educating and normalizing discussions about addiction, and getting those suffering from addiction the resources they need to aid in recovery.

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