

## Grant will help train paramedics

■ **Some Triad counties will get \$5,000 to help with mental health crisis interventions.**

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**GREENSBORO** — The grants are small. But they'll provide a big help, health officials say. The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$5,000 grants Thursday that will allow 11 counties to train paramedics in mental health crisis intervention. Guilford, Rockingham and Forsyth are among counties winning grants, which will also equip paramedics to check a patient's blood alcohol con-

tent, DHHS said in a news release.

The goal is to get people going through a mental health crisis the help they need, which isn't always at an emergency room, said Jim Albright, director of Guilford County Emergency Services.

"The reality is a mental health emergency without a medical emergency is best served somewhere other than an emergency room," Albright said. "We're trying to put the patient in the best place for their care when the real root of their issue is psychological."

In Guilford County, the grant will be used to provide crisis intervention training for paramedics. Some county paramedics have already received the

training, Albright said.

It will allow paramedics to determine if the best destination for a patient is not an emergency room, but a crisis center, such as **Monarch**. Monarch is a nonprofit organization that serves people with developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders.

The grant will also pay for handheld breath alcohol sensors, which paramedics will be trained to use, to help assess whether the crisis is alcohol-related.

"Part of what we're doing with the grant is validating that these patients' needs can be better addressed at places other than emergency rooms," Albright said. "The ulti-

mate goal is the patient is going to receive better care, more appropriate care, at a better cost.

"They will be happier with the care they receive."

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