

## Acton Police Department

Richard Burrows,  
Chief of Police

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Clinical Responder Beth Van Emburgh Begins Work Supporting Acton Police Department





*Beth Van Emburgh is the Acton Police Department's first full-time Clinical Responder.  
(Photo Courtesy Acton Police Department)*

ACTON – Chief Richard Burrows is pleased to share that Beth Van Emburgh recently started her role as the Acton Police Department's first full-time Clinical Responder, serving community members facing a variety of challenges.

Van Emburgh studied Rehabilitation and Disabilities Studies at Springfield College and worked in the field before receiving her Master's Degree in Social Work from Boston College in 2015. She has vast experience, both in corrections and in community settings with children, adults, and families. She works to integrate a trauma-informed and person-first model in de-escalating crises, as well as providing ongoing support and advocacy for all she comes into contact with.

As Clinical Responder, Van Emburgh will assume a variety of responsibilities:

- Serving as a conduit between residents and community-based substance misuse and mental-health services.
- Working with an umbrella of local and state organizations, including Family Services, Council on Aging, Veterans Agent, Community Resources Coordinator, Acton Nursing Services, Domestic Violence Services Network, state Department of Mental Health, and others.
- Serving as a co-first responder for calls involving substance misuse and/or mental health issues.
- Training officers for improved and more consistent responses on mental-health calls.
- Developing a model for a Jail/Arrest Diversion Program.
- Ensure that community-based services are culturally competent, accessible, and equitable to all.

Van Emburgh is a full-time member of the Department. The position is funded through a multi-year grant from the state Department of Mental Health.

Van Emburgh sees being pro-active as a key part of the effort's success. "Initiatives like this have been reactive in the past, but that is putting a Band-aid on a problem," Van Emburgh said. "It's important to address issues before they become a crisis. It could be anything, the need for emergency housing, food, clothing, or adults with children or parents who are struggling."

She adds that another key component is working with fellow first responders.

“It’s vital to provide support to these men and women who are doing tough things,” she says. “To provide an opportunity to grab a cup of coffee, and talk about what they have been through, is very important.”

Van Emburgh grew up in Acton, and graduated from Acton-Boxborough Regional High School.

“When this position came up, it was a perfect way to combine the community work, clinician work, and my love for the town,” Van Emburgh said. “There is a lot of need in town that I wasn’t exposed to growing up. This is where I need to be, to give back to the town that raised me. It’s nice to be home.”

“Beth has had an immediate impact, making connections with co-workers and the community,” Chief Burrows said. “Her clinician expertise will be crucial in helping the Department support those in need of services in our community with care and compassion.”

*View Van Emburgh’s recent interview on Acton TV [here](#).*

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