

Good News

VOLUME I, ISSUE I

WINTER

TEAM TWO



Good News Bulletin—Far too often, the public does not hear about the really good work going on by law enforcement and mental health crisis workers. This year, DMH asked the Coordinator to design and distribute an annual bulletin to police agencies and partners highlighting some of Team Two’s successes.

When a mental health crisis arises, whether it is within a family home, at a high school or in a public place, it is critical that the first responders are trained in mental health issues, in mental health law and in working together to resolve the crisis. Team Two seeks to both educate the first responder and to build the relationships necessary to working together in crisis.

Team Two, established in May of 2013, was initially funded by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and called for 8 trainings yearly in 5 different regions around the state. In 2015, the Department of Public Safety collaborated with DMH to provide additional funding to ensure that police dispatchers be included in the training, and to create a separate training specifically for dispatchers and 911 call

takers. The combined funding reflects the collaborative nature of the program. Vermont Care Partners administers this yearly grant and subcontracts with Kristin Chandler to coordinate the implementation of the trainings. Vermont Cooperative for Practice Improvement and Innovation provides an evaluation tool that is administered at the time of the training and again six months post-training. A Steer-

ing Committee comprised of representatives from DMH, Vermont State Police, Chiefs and Sheriffs, Designated Mental Health Agencies, Emergency Service Directors, DAIL, the Department of Health, NAMI and the Criminal Justice Training Academy meets quarterly and provides oversight of the curriculum.

Middlebury

A terrific response from Vermont State Police, New Haven barracks, Middlebury PD and Addison County Sheriff led to a peaceful resolution of a suicidal person. The first act by the state trooper was to immediately consult with the clinician to better understand the situation, establishing a tone of collaboration. Police were attentive and thoughtful, and made it clear that safety and keeping things de-escalated were their priorities. The clinician and caregivers freely shared all information relevant to safety in this situation.

Next, there was a discussion among law enforcement and crisis staff clarifying roles and ways to support each other. The troopers showed respect for the clinician’s knowledge and clinical judgment. As the crisis clinician turned to writing the warrant application,

the designated lead VSP trooper approached the client calmly, sitting down and engaging this individual respectfully in conversation, taking his time to establish rapport. At one point, when the action had moved outside, the trooper sat with the person in the pouring rain. Throughout the intervention, police never rushed or used physical force. In fact, the need for any physical contact was

averted by the sensitivity and patience exhibited by the officers. They were willing to be creative and accommodating, even gently encouraging the client into the cruiser and allowing the client to smoke a cigarette there before driving the individual to the barracks, where they felt the client would be calmer and more comfortable than in the Emergency Department at Porter Hospital.



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Springfield

A Springfield PD officer spent some time attempting to help a depressed and suicidal man who had access to a firearm. Officer Jeremy Fitzgibbons took the time to ensure that the subject

and family members would be safe and managed to convince the man to go to the hospital voluntarily. Officer Fitzgibbons worked closely with the Health Care & Rehabilitation Services

screeener at the man’s residence and then followed the man and his brother to the hospital to make sure the individual received help.

Rutland

Coordination and cooperation between Lebanon, NH PD, Rutland PD, VSP, Brattleboro PD, the Health Care & Rehabilitation Services crisis team, the Rutland Mental Health Services Crisis (RMHS) team and the Brattleboro Retreat led to a peaceful outcome for a suicidal

phone caller who would not reveal his location to the crisis worker. His number was blocked but the RMHS crisis screener was able to contact some of the above police agencies. The cell phone from which the man was calling was pinged and even though he said he was

at the Quechee Gorge Bridge, the caller was located safely in his Brattleboro apartment. The individual was given a ride to the Retreat for treatment. Lives are being saved because of the excellent cooperation between law enforcement and mental health responders.

“The Trooper was empathetic and supportive.”

Huntington

Vermont State Police requested assistance from HowardCenter crisis to respond to a suicidal juvenile. A member of the

HowardCenter crisis team responded to the residence and was able to handle the situation so that the trooper could return

to the road to respond to other emergencies.

Morrisville

A Vermont State Trooper brought a 20 year old man to Copley hospital for a mental health screening. The trooper was empathetic and supportive,

and ended up giving the young man a ride to friend’s house in Burlington. The Lamoille County Mental Health crisis worker involved in the call felt

like the trooper went above and beyond. This was a good example of teamwork between mental health crisis teams and law enforcement.

Milton

Milton police requested assistance from Northwest Counseling and Support Services (NCSS) for a call with a suicidal male in an automobile. When the crisis worker responded to the scene,

police and negotiators on scene allowed the worker to attempt to talk the man out of the car for over an hour. The incident ended peacefully with great cooperation between the crisis worker

and the law enforcement personnel on scene and the individual was transported to the hospital on a mental health warrant.



Kristin Chandler, Team Two Coordinator

Hot Topics in the Legislature

The “Grenon Group” is a group of individuals that formed after the shooting death of 'Phil' Grenon by Burlington Police in his apartment last March. Phil, a 76 year old man with mental illness was being evicted for disturbances at his senior housing project. Retired Senator Jim Leddy, who was friends with Phil Grenon, organized a meeting of a few people to discuss what might/should be done to prevent a reoccurrence not just in Burlington, but anywhere in Vermont.

The core group includes retired Judge Michael Kupersmith, Rep. Anne Donahue, a legislator and advocate who self-identifies as a person who has lived with mental illness, Shay Totten, a former journalist and parent, Laurie Emerson, direc-

tor of the Vermont chapter of the National Alliance of the Mentally Ill, Robert Appel, former Defender General and former Director of the Vermont Human Rights Commission, and Cindy Taylor-Patch, Director of Training at the Vermont Police Academy.

Others who have joined the group include Dr. Richard Bernstein, retired psychiatrist and former Director of in-Patient Services at the UVM Medical Center (and now active member of the Richmond Rescue Squad), Peter Mallary, former legislator and now Associate Director of the Vermont Association of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Julie Tessler, Director of Vermont Care Partners, Wilda White, President of Vermont Psychiat-

ric Survivors, and Jan Wright, Deputy Chief of Police in Burlington.

The Grenon Group met with a group of Legislators in mid-January. They are focusing on exploring three areas for legislative and community action: police training around responding to mental health crises, resources for mobile mental health programs and a establishing a critical review commission, similar to the current mandated Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission. Currently, H. 145 calls for establishing a Mental Health Crisis Response Commission and is sponsored by Reps. Anne Donahue and Bill Lippert. So far, it has not made it out of committee.



Group discussion

“They are focusing on exploring three areas for legislative and community action...”

Team Two at the IACP

In the Fall of 2016, Team Two representatives Kristin Chandler, Montpelier Police Chief Tony Facos and Washington County Mental Health CEO Mary Moulton presented at the International Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference in San Diego, California. Team Two’s presentation, entitled “Mental Health Crisis Response: A Collaborative Approach Between Law Enforcement and Mental Health Crisis Clinicians” was offered on the Smaller Agency Track and drew approximately 55 attendees. Participants heard about how the training was developed,

about why law enforcement should care about it and just what the day long training entailed. The three presenters also offered a mock scenario in which they drew four volunteers from the audience to

work through a scenario involving a veteran experiencing suicidal thoughts. It was a very successful presentation. The volunteers were rewarded with small nips of Vermont maple syrup!



Pictured: Chief Tony Facos and Mary Moulton. Missing from the picture is Kristin Chandler

Frank Silfies, Jr. 2016 Awards

Team Two announces the recipients of this year's Team Two Frank Silfies Award, presented to a law enforcement officer and a mental health crisis clinician who exemplify collaborative response to mental health crises.

Created last year in memory of Frank Silfies, the former Emergency Services Director at Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) and a valuable member of the original Team Two Steering Committee, this award honors Frank's commitment to working closely with police officers to find the safest, best outcome for people experiencing a mental health crisis. Nominations are solicited from all the designated mental health agencies in Vermont as well as from all of the Vermont Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs and Station Commanders at Vermont State Police. The Team Two Steering Committee reviews the nominations and selects the recipients. Members of the

Steering Committee include representatives from a municipal police department, county sheriffs, the Vermont State Police, the Criminal Justice Training Council, Emergency Services Directors, the Department of Aging and Independent Living, NAMI Vermont, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health and designated mental health agencies.

Among the nominations for mental health crisis workers this year, the Committee found that two people are extremely deserving of this award so will be awarding the 2016 Team Two Frank Silfies Award to co-recipients. Rachel Emerson, of the Clara Martin Center, and Janet Potter, of Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) will both be honored with the award given to a mental health crisis worker. The Steering Committee also had a difficult choice among the nominations for the law enforce-

ment officer but wholeheartedly chose Sergeant Loretta Stalnaker of the Randolph Police Department as the law enforcement recipient this year.

Ms. Emerson was nominated by her supervisor, Kristen Briggs, who wrote, "Rachel has been a dedicated member of the Clara Martin team for over two decades. Rachel is a person whisperer and has great insight into the needs of others. Her contribution to keeping the communities around her safe over the years is invaluable."

Ms. Potter was nominated by her supervisor, HCRS Emergency Services Director Kate Lamphere. In recommending Janet for this award, Ms. Lamphere wrote, "Janet takes the time to get to know officers, so that they feel comfortable and trust her. Janet is the first one to step up to go out on complicated calls, often with enthusiasm and passion."

Ms. Lamphere went on to provide an example of Ms. Potter stepping in to help a suicidal person while off shift, coordinating with law enforcement and dispatch to get needed resources to a person in crisis. Sgt. Stalnaker was nominated by Kristen Briggs, the Acute Care Coordinator at Clara Martin Center. Ms. Briggs wrote, "Office Stalnaker has always responded to different crises in the town of Randolph with great respect toward the person in crisis as well as with a respectful and collaborative approach with the staff at Clara Martin Center. She goes out of her way to help support the continuum of care that CMC strives to keep with persons served."



Rachel Emerson and Sgt. Stalnaker

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When they arrived at the barracks, the client refused to leave the car and, again, police showed extraordinary kindness and patience, allowing the client to sit in the cruiser with the door open, while maintaining observation and safety.

During this process, the clinician consulted about the warrant procedure and coordinated tasks with a sergeant at the barracks. When she arrived at the barracks, she was provided access to phone, fax machine and computer.

When she called the sheriff on a personal cell phone number

he'd provided to our Emergency Team, he immediately and cheerfully responded that he was "on it," and quickly arranged transportation to the hospital.

When the Emergency Team Coordinator later wrote to the Station Commander to express appreciation for his troopers' judgment, skill and compassion, he responded in a note, "I have been very pleased with the Team 2 Trainings, and feel it has been making a big difference with our perspective(s) over the past few years."

TEAM TWO

137 Elm Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Cell Phone: 802-236-5065
E-mail: TeamTwoVermont@gmail.com



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AND MENTAL HEALTH
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