

# **PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE TESTIMONY**

Behavioral Health Commission for Adult Mental Health

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Bureau of Training and Education

Good morning. The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), is grateful to the members of the commission for the invitation to participate in this important discussion regarding adult mental health in Pennsylvania. We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide:

- An overview of how the Pennsylvania State Police provide service in Pennsylvania
- An overview of PSP's efforts to train our members in the administration of Naloxone
- An overview of PSP's efforts to train our members in responding to mental health crisis events
- Recommendations from PSP on potential usage of available funding to support crisis services

### **Overview of PSP Service**

The Pennsylvania State Police serves as the primary provider of full-time police services to over fifty (50) percent of the municipalities in the Commonwealth. An additional 423 municipalities rely upon the PSP to provide part time police coverage; meaning their police department does not offer round-the-clock service and those hours which the municipal police department is not on-duty, fall to the PSP for coverage. These PSP services are typically launched from stations located within any given county. Most of the municipalities served by the PSP are rural townships and boroughs with low population densities, low tax bases, and scarce municipal resources. The PSP also serves as the sole provider of police service to motorists along the Pennsylvania Turnpike as well as many Interstate highways that connect our populated areas.

The local Pennsylvania State Police Troops and Stations facilitate mental health services commensurate with the availability of services within the county that station is located within. It is incumbent upon our local stations to seek out needed services when mental health crisis events arise and to develop relationships with county-based mental health service providers in advance of said events. Our local Troopers are dependent upon a county's resources to accomplish the goals of mental health crisis intervention; that is, responding to the calls for service and ensuring citizens in needs of mental health treatment are diverted to treatment when appropriate rather than being unnecessarily or inappropriately funneled into the criminal justice system.

The Pennsylvania State Police is unique among law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth and across the country in the sense that we provide local law enforcement services to a patchwork of communities with varying resources across the state; and we do this while being a law enforcement agency administered at a state level rather than a local or county level. This uniqueness provides the citizens of Pennsylvania with a lot of enhanced and highly professional police services, but this structure can also

be a hinderance when interfacing with county and local resources. It is critical that our local stations continue to work towards nurturing the relationships with their personnel and local and county-based mental health resources.

Police response to mental health emergencies is codified within Title 50, the Pennsylvania Mental Health Act. Chapter 15, section 7302 of that act enables police officers or Troopers who personally observe conduct which constitutes reasonable grounds to believe the person is severely mentally disabled and in need of immediate treatment, to be taken to an approved facility for emergency examination. Upon arrival, the officer is required to provide a written account of the grounds for the examination.

The same provision allows family members or other individuals to seek a mental health warrant from a qualified physician. After outlining the grounds for believing an evaluation is needed, the warrant is delivered to the police, authorizing them to take the individual into custody and deliver them to the medical facility for evaluation.

In cases which do not rise to the level of several mental disability, Troopers are still able to refer individuals to mental health services including medical/treatment facilities, drug and alcohol counseling, hotlines, etc. The level and extent of mental health services is then solely dependent upon the level of care available in their respective county. For instance, troopers assigned to stations within Chester County have a relatively robust amount of mental health services and support to draw upon as Chester County is a leader among counties in many areas to include mental health care provisions. Conversely, troopers assigned to more rural counties likely have less county-based mental health resources to utilize.

### **Overview of PSP Efforts to Train our members in the administration of Naloxone**

The Pennsylvania State Police maintains a relatively robust Naloxone program outline within an administrative regulation and overseen by our Bureau of Training & Education in cooperation with the Troops and Stations. All Department members to include Liquor Enforcement Officers are required to be certified in the administration of Naloxone. The initial certification occurs during basic training and biennial recertification occurs at the Troop and Station levels. One Naloxone kit is assigned to each marked and unmarked police vehicle at all PSP stations. A single kit contains two doses of 4mg/4ml Naloxone each. Replacement Naloxone and related supplies are available through Troop Procurement and Supply units or the Bureau of Staff Services. Members are required to input Naloxone administration details into the on-line Overdose Information Network, also known as "ODIN", following any Naloxone deployment.

## **Overview of current PSP training efforts in the area of mental health crisis response**

Mental health crisis intervention training is a multi-pronged approach within the PSP. As of August 2021, the following programs are available and administered through the Bureau of Training and Education. At the PSP Cadet basic training level, we administer eight (8) hours of LEADS training. LEADS is an acronym for “Law Enforcement Active Diffusion Strategies” a Department of Justice approved de-escalation-based training program taught by PSP members certified through a train-the-trainer program.

Cadets receive four (4) hours of classroom instruction in identifying the signs and symptoms of mental illness instructed by professionals from the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, two (2) hours of Autism awareness training facilitated by personnel from the Autism Services, Education, Resources and Training Collaborative and classroom instruction delivered by in-house criminal law instructors dealing with Pennsylvania’s mental health laws and the Department’s mental health response policy. Cadets receive two (2) hours of Stress management training delivered by the PSP Employee Training Unit, three (3) hours of Post-Traumatic Stress Response training from the Department’s Members Assistance Program, and two (2) hours of Critical Incident Debriefing instruction taught by Monsignor Muldowney of the Diocese of Scranton. PSP Cadets participate in a one (1) hour classroom event sponsored by the Pennsylvania Special Olympics, two (2) hours of Cultural Diversity training and another two (2) hours of Diversity and Inclusion training as well as an additional two (2) hours of Racial Profiling Awareness and Prevention training, all delivered by law enforcement instructors.

Cadets are also provided with the opportunity to complete on-line training programs dealing with De-escalation & Conflict Resolution and Force Mitigation Opportunities. These on-line training events have been developed through the professional police training group, Calibre Press.

Field members are exposed to mental health crisis intervention training through yearly mandatory training events. Since 2010, the Bureau of Training and Education has incorporated related topics into its yearly training events. These topics include, “use-of-force within the crisis intervention response”, “disability, aggression and the assault cycle”, “endangered missing persons”, “tactical communication and conflict management”, “understanding and effectively engaging individuals with traumatic brain injuries” and other similar topics.

As of 2021, all newly promoted front-line supervisors must attend an eight (8) hour training event entitled, Mandatory Mental Health and Tactical Communications. This training focuses on the supervisor’s role in coordinating a proper response to mental health crisis events. Other voluntary training offerings include an eight (8) hour course entitled Dynamics of Officer/Citizen Encounters which focuses upon effective communication with people in crisis while maintaining solid officer safety habits. Another eight (8) hour offering

is called Tactical Communication and Behavior Management. This class builds upon existing communication skills to enhance a member's ability to remain calm while dealing with individuals under stress and in crisis. This course draws attention to the importance of successfully coping with verbal abuse through deflection and redirection and tools to enhance an officer's active listening ability.

Also beginning in 2021, the Department has partnered with several Crisis Intervention Teams to offer the week-long, Memphis Model based, law enforcement training program to PSP members. Chester and Dauphin counties have hosted PSP exclusive training events both at their county facilities and at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy in Hershey. The Southwest Regional Crisis Intervention Team, a team covering Butler and Westmoreland counties, recently held a weeklong PSP exclusive training event at the Allegheny Township building.

The Pennsylvania State Police also offers its Police Communications Operators specialized training in the identification, handling, and dispatching of mental health crisis events. Our PCO's receive mandatory training in this field through their yearly update training as well as voluntary advanced courses such as "Navigating Crisis". Navigating Crisis was first developed in 2020 and provides specific instruction on handling calls for crisis service utilizing a strong foundation rooted in the Memphis Model teachings. Other courses include, "Critical Listening and Multi-Tasking", "Customer Service & Interpersonal Skills" and "Stress Management". All these classes touch upon the critical role dispatchers hold within the crisis intervention response.

### **Recommendations from PSP on potential usage of available funding to support crisis services**

Due to the previously discussed uniqueness of the PSP mission as it pertains to police response to mental health crisis, the decision as to how to best utilize available funding in that training arena is not easily answered. A workgroup consisting of Pennsylvania State Police instructors, field members, our Member's Assistance Program coordinator, as well as professionals from the several county Crisis Intervention Teams, namely CIT coordinators from Center County, Chester County, and Dauphin County, are scheduled to meet at the PSP Academy in Hershey on September 27<sup>th</sup>. This group is meeting to discuss how to best enhance the crisis intervention response program within the PSP. Several options have already been forwarded for discussion.

One option would be to continue to rely upon those counties that currently stand-up crisis intervention teams for the continued training of PSP members. One benefit of this approach is that the training protocols already exist; in essence this becomes a "plug and play" training option providing the PSP with an already vetted training plan. The downside

to this option is that the administration of the 40-hour long Memphis Model Crisis Intervention Team law enforcement training is labor intensive. The host CIT enlists the assistance of individuals from many different mental health response disciplines as well as community members dealing with mental health crisis, and medical care providers. Furthermore, the county-based CIT law enforcement training program devotes many of the 40 hours to discussing treatment options and protocols available only within that county. County administrators as well as local hospital health care providers and administrative staff speak to what is available through their social service office or at their hospital. While this information is extremely valuable to police working within that county is of little value to law enforcement from other jurisdictions. For instance, Ms. Ashley Yinger of the Dauphin County Crisis Intervention Team has kindly hosted two (2) week-long, PSP exclusive, CIT law enforcement training sessions at our facility in Hershey. More than half of the students in attendance work at PSP installations outside of Dauphin County. Post-training student reviews expressed very similar commentary. The non-county-specific mental health crisis response curriculum was fantastic, but the hours spent discussing and highlighting Dauphin County resources and protocols was time wasted. The essence of the Memphis Model of Crisis Intervention Teams is the local partnerships established among local law enforcement and local resources. This focus necessarily alienates a state-wide policing model.

Another option put forth has been to create a fresh training curriculum designed for the PSP by mental health professionals keeping in mind the unique nature of assignments and duty rotations within the PSP. A training course emulating the traditional Memphis Model but modified to reflect the transitory nature of patrol personnel in the PSP and the varying availability of mental health programs within the Commonwealth's sixty-seven (67) counties may be a viable solution. Many agencies have adopted similar strategies. One notable adaptation is the Mental Evaluation Team, or "MET", model in use by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The sheriff's department's Mental Evaluation Team not only provide on-scene crisis intervention to field based deputies requesting assistance at calls for service but also instruct a 32-hour long training course for deputies entitled, Field Operations Crisis Intervention Skill (FOCIS) training. The audience for this course is all patrol deputies new to patrol stations. FOCIS training is considered the flagship course offered by the MET. Every LASD deputy entering patrol will eventually have this minimum baseline of mental health training to help prepare them for engagements with mentally ill persons in crises. Trainers from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, also known by their acronym, "NAMI", provide impactful insights to help deputies better understand what it's like to live with a mental illness. This course also includes an exceptional presentation by their Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST). By the end of 2020, over 1,800 patrol personnel had been trained in the 32-hr FOCIS curriculum. Feedback from participants in the courses indicated this was one of the best experiences for "in-service" training for many of the attendees. It was consistently

reported as one of the most meaningful training courses to help address some of today's highest policing concerns. The FOCIS training offered by the LASD is loosely based on the original CIT Memphis Model but adapted for use within the unique jurisdiction serviced by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

The hope is that this upcoming workgroup will provide deeper insight and best practice solutions to the training of members of the Pennsylvania State Police.

Thank you for inviting the Pennsylvania State Police to provide testimony on this important topic. We look forward to working with the commission to further Crisis Response within the Commonwealth.