

Police Response to Persons Affected By Mental Illness: The One Mind Campaign

April 2, 2020 – The Easthampton Police Department is pleased to report that we have completed a pledge we took in the fall of 2017 to improve our response to those suffering from mental illness in our community. The pledge is part of an initiative called the One Mind Campaign started by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), a 30,000 member professional association for law enforcement that provides training, technical assistance, and recruitment services. To join the One Mind Campaign, law enforcement agencies must pledge to implement four promising practices in a 12-36 month period to ensure successful future interactions between police officers and persons with mental illness.

In the law enforcement community, mental illness has become a common focus, with some departments estimating that as many as 20% of their calls for service are related to mental health challenges. Chief Robert Alberti made the decision to join the International Association of Chiefs of Police's One Mind Campaign because it is vital that officers accord all persons, including those with mental illness, all the individual rights they are entitled, and further that officers seek to protect mentally ill persons from harm and refer them to appropriate services.

In completing the One Mind Pledge, the Easthampton Police Department established a sustainable partnership with local mental health organizations, developed and implemented a model policy to address officers' interactions with those affected by mental illness, and ensured that all of our officers and dispatchers received first responder mental health awareness training, with at least twenty percent of our department completing the more intensive Crisis Intervention Training. The 40-hour Crisis Intervention curriculum is designed by local agencies to train a team of specialized officers to respond to calls that involve individuals with mental health disorders such as depression or intellectual disability. The curriculum includes education on various de-escalation techniques as well as live role-play scenarios of officers responding to persons who need mental health assistance.

The greatest benefit in adopting all the strategies of the One Mind Campaign pledge has been an increase in training, awareness and the enhanced ability for our officers and dispatchers to have successful interactions with people suffering from mental illness in our community.

For more information about the One Mind Campaign, and a list of agencies who have taken the pledge, visit the IACP's website at: <https://www.theiacp.org/projects/one-mind-campaign>.