
Crisis Intervention Incidents

409.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for interacting with those who may be experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis. Interaction with such individuals has the potential for miscommunication and violence. It often requires an officer to make difficult judgments about a person's mental state and intent in order to effectively and legally interact with the individual.

409.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Person in crisis - A person whose level of distress or mental health symptoms have exceeded the person's internal ability to manage his/her behavior or emotions. A crisis can be precipitated by any number of things, including an increase in the symptoms of mental illness despite treatment compliance; noncompliance with treatment, including a failure to take prescribed medications appropriately; co-dependency or any other circumstance or event that causes the person to engage in erratic, disruptive or dangerous behavior that may be accompanied by impaired judgment.

409.2 POLICY

The Plymouth Township Police Department is committed to providing a consistently high level of service to all members of the community and recognizes that persons in crisis may benefit from intervention. The Department will collaborate, where feasible, with mental health professionals to develop an overall intervention strategy to guide its members' interactions with those experiencing a mental health crisis. This is to ensure equitable and safe treatment of all involved.

409.3 SIGNS

Members should be alert to any of the following possible signs of mental health issues or crises:

- (a) A known history of mental illness
- (b) Threats of or attempted suicide
- (c) Loss of memory
- (d) Incoherence, disorientation or slow response
- (e) Delusions, hallucinations, perceptions unrelated to reality or grandiose ideas
- (f) Depression, pronounced feelings of hopelessness or uselessness, extreme sadness or guilt
- (g) Social withdrawal
- (h) Manic or impulsive behavior, extreme agitation or lack of control
- (i) Lack of fear
- (j) Anxiety, aggression, rigidity, inflexibility or paranoia

Plymouth Township Police Department

Policy Manual

Crisis Intervention Incidents

Members should be aware that this list is not exhaustive. The presence or absence of any of these signs should not be treated as proof of the presence or absence of a mental health issue or crisis.

409.4 COORDINATION WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The Chief of Police should designate a Lieutenant to collaborate with mental health professionals to develop an education and response protocol. It should include a list of community resources; including but not limited to, Montgomery County Emergency Services, Mobile Crisis, local hospitals, Central, VA clinic/hospital, Horsham Clinic, Brook Glenn, Bryan Mawr hospital for juveniles, Mental Health or Veteran's Court, or county or state probation and parole to guide department interaction with those who may be suffering from mental illness or who appear to be in a mental health crisis.

409.9 INCIDENT REPORTING

Members engaging in any oral or written communication associated with a mental health crisis should be mindful of the sensitive nature of such communications and should exercise appropriate discretion when referring to or describing persons and circumstances.

Members having contact with a person in crisis should keep related information confidential, except to the extent that revealing information is necessary to conform to department reporting procedures or other official mental health or medical proceedings.

409.9.1 DIVERSION

Individuals should be evaluated as to whether or not, in the member's opinion, the person is a danger to themselves or others, as evident (in the past 30 days) by specific acts, neglect, statements, officer's observations and if so, processed in accordance with the Involuntary Commitments Policy. For additional information, see 50 Pa.C.S. § 7101-7118 the Mental Health Procedures Act.

Individuals who do not meet the criteria for an involuntary commitment may still be transported voluntarily for treatment by Montgomery County Emergency Services or other health provider.

Individuals who do not meet the criteria for an involuntary commitment and decline inpatient evaluation may be referred to Montgomery County Mobile Crisis Unit.

409.11 TRAINING

In coordination with the mental health community and appropriate stakeholders, the Department will develop and provide comprehensive education and training to all department members to enable them to effectively interact with persons in crisis. All members should receive initial crisis intervention training (Police School). The department should develop a member(s) for advanced crisis intervention and hostage negotiation.