

CIT Police Procedures: Interacting with the Mentally Ill

Sample adapted from the Cary, North Carolina, Police Department Procedures

The (Agency) employees will provide individuals suspected of suffering from mental illness with the same high level of service and protection provided to anyone else. Reasonable procedural adjustments may be made to accommodate individual needs on a case-by-case basis. Individuals will not be taken involuntarily into custody by reason of mental illness alone, but only if they have committed an arrestable offense or have demonstrated by their actions to be a threat to the life or safety of themselves or others.

The (Agency) will restrain and transport persons in need of emergency mental commitment and those named in involuntary commitment orders to an appropriate mental health facility for evaluation. The Department will provide transportation, when manpower permits, for individuals who wish to commit themselves to a mental facility. A sworn officer will perform all mental commitments.

Definitions

- *Mental illness* – For the present purpose (CIT), mental illness is a condition that lessens the capacity of an individual to exercise self-control, judgment, and discretion in the conduct of his or her affairs and social relations to the degree that it's necessary or advisable for the person to be under treatment, care, supervision, guidance, or control.
- *Mental commitment* – For the present purpose (CIT), mental commitment is taking custody of and transporting an individual in need of and to mental health evaluation and treatment.
- *Involuntary emergency commitment* – For the present purpose (CIT), an involuntary emergency commitment is the commitment of a mental health consumer executed by an officer without a commitment order on file.
- *Involuntary non-emergency commitment* – For the present purpose (CIT), an involuntary non-emergency commitment is the commitment of a mental health consumer executed by an officer in accordance with an involuntary commitment order issued by a magistrate or clerk of court.

- *Voluntary commitment* – For the present purpose (CIT), a voluntary commitment of a mental health consumer is the commitment of a person who independently and personally decides on admission to a treatment facility.
- *24-hour facility* – A 24-hour facility is one that provides a structured living environment and services for a period of 24 consecutive hours or more.

Employee Training

All employees will receive training on how to interact with individuals suspected of suffering from mental illness. Entry-level personnel will receive documented training during new-employee orientation. Refresher training will be provided to all employees at least every three years.

Recognition of the Characteristics of Mental Illness

When called upon to interact with an individual exhibiting abnormal behavior suspected of being symptomatic of mental illness, recognition of the characteristics of mental illness may help employees decide on an appropriate response. Symptomatic behavior should be evaluated within the total context of the situation when attempting to determine an individual's mental state and the need for intervention. Guidelines for recognition of the symptoms of mental illness will be provided in employee training.

Procedures for Accessing Resources

Communications personnel will have ready access to referral information for available community mental health resources and authorized emergency evaluation facilities and will, upon request, provide this information to employees or citizens. During training, employees will familiarize themselves with procedures for accessing available community mental health resources.

Guidelines for Responding

When responding to individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental illness, employees should gather as much information as possible to assess and stabilize the situation. Specific guidelines for dealing with individuals who are suspected of suffering from mental illness will be provided in employee training.

No individual will be arrested for behavioral manifestations of mental illness that are not criminal in nature. Taking a mentally ill individual into custody can occur only when the individual has committed a crime or presents a danger to the safety of himself/herself or others and meets the criteria for involuntary emergency or non-emergency mental commitment.

Crisis Intervention Team

The (Agency) Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) works in partnership with public safety communications, health professionals, and the community to reach the common goals of safety, understanding, knowledge, and service to individuals who are in crisis and who exhibit symptoms of mental illness. Officers on the Crisis Intervention Team receive specialized training and are certified to work with mentally ill individuals and their families.

When responding to individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental illness, employees should use the Crisis Intervention Team as a resource. Whenever possible, a member of the Crisis Intervention Team should be dispatched to calls for service involving mentally ill individuals. The first Crisis Intervention Team member on the scene will assume responsibility for the call. Additional officers on the scene will provide backup as necessary. Following each call, the Crisis Intervention Team member will submit a report to the Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator.

Commitment Procedures

Involuntary Emergency Commitment

Any person subject to involuntary commitment due to mental illness and who requires immediate hospitalization to prevent harm to him-/herself or others will be taken into immediate custody and restrained in an appropriate manner.

The officer will then transport the person to (Name) County Human Services/ Emergency Admissions for evaluation.

If inpatient treatment is recommended, the officer will transport the person to (name the 24-hour facility) for the second evaluation. If, upon the second evaluation, the examining psychiatrist finds that the person requires inpatient treatment, the officer will transfer custody to hospital personnel. If the examining psychiatrist recommends outpatient treatment, the officer will transport the person back to his or her residence or to the home of a consenting individual.

In the event that the examining psychiatrist finds no evidence of mental illness, the person will be released and the proceedings terminated. If the person so desires, the officer will provide transportation back to the person's residence.

Involuntary Non-Emergency Commitment

Once the officer has verified that an order for involuntary commitment is on file, the officer will take the subject of that order into custody and restrain the person in an appropriate manner with reasonable force. If the officer does not have the actual order in his possession when the person is taken into custody, he must obtain the order before the person is transported to (name the 24-hour facility) Human Services/ Emergency Admissions for examination.

If the examining psychiatrist recommends inpatient treatment, the officer will transport the person to the 24-hour facility specified on the commitment order. If a hospital outside of the county is selected and it's not within reasonable driving distance, the officer will notify the sheriff's office to conduct the transport and the officer will remain with the patient until relieved by hospital staff or a sheriff's deputy. If the selected hospital is within reasonable driving distance, the officer will transport the person to the facility. If outpatient treatment is recommended, the officer will return the completed commitment order to the magistrate's office and transport the person back to the person's residence or to the home of a consenting individual.

Upon arrival at (name the 24-hour facility) or other specified facility, the officer will wait up to one hour for the person to be examined. If the person has not been examined by the end of that hour, the officer will notify the appropriate attending medical personnel that the person will be left in the custody of hospital personnel. The officer will then return the signed original commitment order to the magistrate's office.

In the event the person is hospitalized and the involuntary commitment order has been issued by a magistrate based on the attending physician's initial examination and affidavit, the officer will assist in transporting the patient to the hospital named on the commitment order, provided that the hospital is within reasonable driving distance. Transport of the patient will be by ambulance and will be scheduled by (name the hospital or facility). The officer will ride in the ambulance with the patient and the paramedic team. Upon turning over custody of the patient to the hospital staff, the officer will notify an on-duty supervisor to arrange transportation back to his or her patrol vehicle. Then the officer will return the served order to the magistrate's office.

When transporting a female patient from (name the hospital or facility), at least one member of the transport team must be female.

Voluntary Commitment

The Department will provide transportation, if staffing levels permit, for individuals wishing to commit themselves to a mental institution. If no one is available to transport the individual, the Department will make every reasonable effort to locate an alternative source of transportation.

Transportation of Persons Subject to Evaluation

An officer of the same sex will provide transportation for persons subject to mental health evaluation unless a family member of the person accompanies the person during transport.

The preferred option is to have a family member accompany the patient. The second option, if necessary, is to call in a sworn employee of the Department who is the same sex as the person being transported. As a last resort, the officer may be accompanied by a non-sworn employee of the Department or an available professional.