

Delaware County Board of Supervisors'
Police Reform and Reinvention
Collaborative Committee
Delhi, New York

February 5, 2021

Dear Committee Members,

We are advocates who strive to improve conditions for people with mental illness, and support for their families and friends. Among us, we have professional and/or personal experience that informs our work. Some are members of the Delaware and Otsego affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the largest grassroots mental Health organization in the country dedicated to building better lives for Americans affected by mental illness. Some have met as an ad hoc group, The Mental Health Justice Project, focused initially on improving conditions for Delaware County jail inmates with mental health issues.

We recognize that contact with dispatchers, law enforcement and corrections officers can be challenging for all involved in managing behaviors involving episodes of mental illness or substance misuse. It is encouraging that this Committee is committed to identifying ways to enhance the skills of law enforcement, and to potentially realign community resources to better serve the public.

We believe that best practice can be enhanced by:

*** Accepting the Greene County Sheriff's Department offer of access to their training and resources on dealing with mental health, domestic conflict and substance abuse**

***Engaging Delaware County dispatchers, law enforcement, first responders and corrections staff in the Chenango Health Network's training series on Crisis Intervention and de-escalation.**

***Consulting with Mike Hatch, Crisis Services Director at the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier (previously a Johnson City Police Lieutenant), regarding ways in which their experience with police/mental health collaborations may be implemented in Delaware County.**

***Ensuring that all dispatchers receive CIT training, and that personnel receive debriefing after dealing with especially difficult situations**

***Advocating for enhancement of the region's Mobile Crisis Assessment Team's capacity to serve the needs of the community.**

***Collaborating with other community agencies and entities in distributing current information about preventive resources and services available, using social and print media**

***Advocating for funding and expanded peer support services, and incorporating certified peer counselors and recovery coaches into Sheriff Department protocols for response to and follow up of incidents, and for transitioning incarcerated inmates back to the community.**

***Ensuring that the above trainings have refresher components**

***Convening periodic Committee meetings to assess progress and identify additional needs.**

We remain available to assist in identifying resources and providing constructive feedback. Further information about the National Alliance on Mental Illness and its support, education and advocacy programs can be found at www.nami.org or this state's Chapter website www.naminys.org . Information about local support meetings for family members of those with mental health challenges can be accessed at namidelawareco@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

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