

Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery,
Collaborative for Recovery Dialogue
Pittsburgh, PA
April 13, 2017

In attendance were 11: 5 consumers of recovery services, 6 police officers, and 5 MH providers

Facilitators: Wesley Sowers and Sarah Goldstein

Summary writer: Margaret Park

Question: What are some ideas for discussion from our participants?

Police officer(s): 302—we need to have all the paperwork in order. It must be done when walk in the door.

MH provider(s): We are always short-handed. ReSolve told us it was to be the officer that handled the paperwork.

Police officer(s): We are always running short-handed. We need to be ready for anything. There might be a shooting. Police can petition a 302 when they see something to alert them to self-harm or harm to another. But it's not merely a family member's hearsay.

Police officer(s): We are never there to hurt someone; handcuffs are regulation for calls. We don't use them because we think you are bad. Whether it is a good or bad experience, it is the patient who dictates how we respond. We took you because we care. If you're calm, we will meet you there. Some (patients) come with violent behavior. We don't come in high and mighty—all patients dictate how it goes.

MH provider: What is your best advice?

Police officer(s): People say we over react. If there is a weapon-- it's seen as a weapon. We expect compliance. If we don't get it we ramp it up.

MH provider: Do you recognize psychosis?

Police officer(s): They are probably off meds. We'll ask the caregiver. We'll try to get the most information so we can assess the situation. Sometimes the medic will come in. After 27 years as a cop I still get nervous if I get pulled over. It's human nature. We will do our best but we won't be punching bags. We want what is best for all: the officers, everybody. We want it to be a good day.

MH provider: Have you had the CIT training What did you think?

Police officer(s): I enjoyed the CIT training because of my father. There are so many people in society that suffer mental health problems. Police must address this issue. You can use what you learn as soon as you're done.

Consumer(s): Some cops are not nice when I get 302'd like they should be. Others don't like their jobs. Some are nice—they sit down and talk you out of hurting yourself. I want advice. Not all cops are the same.

Police officer(s): Right--not all cops are the same, neither is anyone with mental illness. Maybe the cop doesn't want to talk that day. You (patient) have to understand—not all responses will be the same. You have to understand...

Consumer: See? That's why I have trust issues with you...anybody from the government I don't trust.

Police officer: Most people I don't have to accept. I don't trust you. You don't trust me. You have to understand. If you become resistant or agitated you have to expect we will get our way.

Consumer: I was bumming cigarettes 3 AM. I almost got arrested. I was handcuffed, put up in the car. I wasn't agitated at all.

Question: On compliance – is there any choice involved?

Police officer(s): Everybody has free will. That's what makes us human. Communication builds trust in all situations. Everybody has choice. People used to be more respectful. You should try to open communication with the officer. CIT helps for the officers.

Question: Does everybody agree?

MH provider(s): Zone 6 is holistic. People who are hearing voices, they can't stop the voices.

Police officer(s): If someone charges with a knife...we've all come along with the assumption of danger. My biggest problem is with HIPPA. We get a call and the hospital can't tell us anything. So it decreases one's ability to help.

Consumer: My mother was unable to help me because of her disability. She asked the police to assess me. I wasn't threatening anyone. They didn't refer me or anything. They didn't help at all.

Police officer(s): That's unrealistic. There is no length. How long does it take a psychiatrist to assess someone? Really how long? We are restricted under the Mental Health Act. A threat must be manifested in an act or report of a direct observation from someone. Our concern is keeping the peace and preserving life.

Question: What kind of expectations do we have of each other and what do we want from each other?

Consumer: We want to know about other options.

Police: Now we have ReSolve for that.

Consumer: I want advice from the police when they come to my door.

Police officer: When my father passed away my mother wanted to be with him. I knew it wasn't real suicidality.