



REPORT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT MENTAL HEALTH TRAININGS
PURSUANT TO ACT NO. 79 OF THE 2011-12 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2014

INTRODUCTION

This Report is required by Section 34 of Act. No. 79 of the 2011 – 2012 General Assembly which appropriated to the Office of Attorney General funds to continue a training program for law enforcement officers in their interactions with persons exhibiting mental health conditions. Pursuant to Section 34, the Office shall provide a progress report as to the expenditure of the funds and the status of the training effort. The Report shall be submitted to the Secretary of Administration and the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. The Act 79 appropriation was a continuation of the funding provided in Section 13 of Act No. 80 funding appropriated in the 2003 -2004 General Assembly for the same training purpose.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Pursuant to Act No. 79 of the 2011- 2012 General Assembly, the Attorney General's Office was assigned the following responsibilities and appropriation:

Sec. 34. Protection to persons and property - Attorney general

(a) Of the above general fund appropriation, \$20,000.00 is appropriated to the office of the attorney general to establish a training program for selected law enforcement officers to assist them, during the performance of their duties, in their interactions with persons exhibiting mental health conditions.

(1) The office of the attorney general shall, in consultation with the Vermont coalition for disability rights and other organizations, design and implement this training program.

(2) By January 15 of each year and until funds are fully expended, the attorney general shall submit to the secretary of administration and the house and senate committees on appropriations a report summarizing how the funds have been used and how the trainings have progressed.

(3) Unexpended funds shall be carried forward and used for the purpose of this subsection in future years.

ACTIONS TAKEN

In response to the original Act No. 80, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) initially consulted with the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council (VCJTC), the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (VCDR) and the Vermont Division of Mental Health. These groups created the Act 80 Advisory Group to design and implement the training program. The Act 80 Advisory Group is a multi-disciplinary group that includes state employees, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, mental health professionals, advocates and members of the public. We recognize and honor each partner's unique and valuable expertise and contribution to this training partnership and thank them for

their dedication to this effort. These same partners will continue to act as the Act 80/Act 79 Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group meetings are coordinated by the Attorney General's Office and a list of the members of the Act 80/Act 79 Advisory Group is attached as Appendix A.

The original Act 80 Advisory Group identified the need for a full time Training Coordinator and the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council offered the services of a staff person.

The original Act 80 Advisory Group also created a Curriculum Committee, which was charged with the task of drafting the training curriculum, and designing and implementing the training plan. The members of the original Curriculum Committee are listed as Appendix B. This Committee completed the curriculum in 2006 and trainings commenced in May of that year. Since that time, the Curriculum Committee has not met. The Act 80 Group thanks the Curriculum Committee members for their critical contribution to these trainings.

The curriculum for the six-hour basic awareness training was finalized and the class called "Interacting with People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis" was offered starting in May of 2006. "Interacting with People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis" has become part of the VCJTC's standard in-service course offerings. VCJTC is committed to continuing to offer the class.

As of 12/31/13, 68% (853) of full-time certified officers in Vermont have attended "Interacting with People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis". In addition 21% (76) of Vermont's part-time officers have received the training. The overall percentage of officers trained in Vermont is now at 58%, which reflects a 13% increase from 2011.

In addition, since 2006, approximately 200 other individuals have also received the training. This category of individuals includes civilians (i.e. dispatchers) and those that are no longer employed in Vermont as a law enforcement officer. We continue to be encouraged by the growing number of attendees and departments participating in the training. See Appendix C.

The Attorney General's Office has been delegated the authority for the management of \$20,000.00 appropriated in Sec. 34 of Act 79 of the 2012 Legislative Session, to be used for assisting law enforcement officers during the performance of their duties in their interactions with persons exhibiting mental health conditions. The Attorney General's Office will track all expenditures for this appropriation. Sec. 34 provides authorization to carry the balance of the amount forward in order for it to be used for the implementation of the appropriate training programs. No funds have been expended in 2013; however, a working group will be formed in order to evaluate ways to enhance the current training, both in terms of content and expanded access.

The VCJTC will plan, present and administer the trainings. The Attorney General's Office will coordinate and assist the VCJTC with the planning, administration and presentation of the trainings.

TRAINING PLAN

The goal of the Act 80/Act 79 project is to improve police officers' competency in responding to people with mental illness by providing high quality, comprehensive, affordable and convenient training.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify specific training needs.
2. Develop a comprehensive curriculum.
3. Offer high quality training that is affordable and convenient to all police officers in Vermont.
4. Establish a model training program that becomes part of the VCJTC standard in-service course offerings.

1. Identify specific training needs

Training needs were determined by the training needs assessment conducted during the first year of this project and under the guidance of the original Act 80 Advisory Group comprised of major stakeholders. The training goals identified are detailed in the next section.

2. Develop a Comprehensive Curriculum

A six-hour awareness level training program was developed. It was created to meet the following training goals:

- to increase officers' awareness of issues regarding interaction with people who have psychiatric and/or developmental disabilities.
- to provide officers with tools to assist them in de-escalating people in crisis. The following issues are emphasized:
 - maximize officer and civilian safety,
 - increase the officer's effectiveness,
 - increase the officer's professionalism, and
 - decrease civilian complaints and civil liability issues.
- Recognizing that a person's credibility is sometimes questioned based on his or her disability, this training is designed to increase an officer's awareness of the

issues around stereotypes and stigma. Verbal and non-verbal communication skills are stressed (demonstrating active listening skills; being clear and concise; thinking of alternative ways to communicate with people who may have temporary or permanent cognitive difficulty; etc.).

- To also train officers on:
 - mental health conditions/disorders,
 - recognition of a disability,
 - Vermont laws related to mental health treatment and voluntary and involuntary hospitalization procedures,
 - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended in 2009
 - the roles of the mental health system and the police, and
 - state and local resources.

The leaders of this project felt strongly that stakeholders with a wide array of perspectives should participate and that individuals who have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disability must be included in order for the training to be of the highest quality. These individuals' perspectives on issues such as stereotypes, stigma, involuntary treatment and legal issues are invaluable. The involvement of Peer Education Program Staff from Washington County Mental Health Services has been very well received. The Staff present on their experiences with mental illness and how it has affected their lives, any positive or negative experience they have had with police, suggestions for how to have the most positive interactions, and also answer any questions that students have. We are tremendously grateful for the peer educators' participation and their perspective has been crucial to the success of these trainings.

The Act 80/Act 79 Advisory Groups are very appreciative of the support and commitment demonstrated by the VCJTC and the law enforcement community to these critical trainings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2013, the Advisory Group met three times, in June, August, and November. The group reviewed and updated the PowerPoint that is used as part of the training. The Advisory Group also engaged in extensive discussions on how best to further the goals of the Act 80 training and, based on those discussions, make the following recommendations.

1. Provide funds to the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council to continue trainings and develop an evaluation of the existing curriculum. (Note there is \$20,000 carryover funds available from the 2012 appropriation.)

2. Form a working group, within the Act 80 Advisory group, to identify methods and technology that will enhance the content and accessibility of the training and to create a guide for supervisors.
3. Explore methods to evaluate and determine the effectiveness of the current training. Collaborate with the Vermont Center for Justice Research to help identify evaluation options and engage community partners, including peers, to encompass broader feedback.
4. Review the content of Act 80 training and concurrent types of training (for example the “Team Two Training” and training occurring at hospitals) in order to insure consistency and to eliminate contradictory messages.
5. Require Act 80 training to be mandatory for Vermont law enforcement.
6. Mandate Act 80 training as a requirement of conducted electrical weapons (CEW) certification.
7. Require statewide development and implementation of mobile crisis response teams.
8. Identify and publicize existing, successful, collaborative police/social worker programs. Explore state, local and federal funding strategies to implement such programs.
9. Explore collaboration with other professionals who are interested in benefitting from the Act 80 training.
10. Identify an entity or individuals to coordinate regional/local conversations between law enforcement, crisis workers, service providers, and peer-supports.

CONCLUSION

The Office of the Attorney General and the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council are honored to have this opportunity to administer these critical trainings and funds. We welcome advice from the Administration, the Legislature, and the public on the development and implementation of these trainings.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

Vermont Officers, by Agency, Who Have Received Act 80 Training

Agency Name	Total Trained	Total Employees	Percent Trained
Addison County Sheriff's Office	2	16	13%
Barre City Police Department	21	33	64%
Barre Town Police Department	10	20	50%
Bellows Falls Police Department	3	15	20%
Bennington County Sheriff's Office	7	39	18%
Bennington Police Department	6	27	22%
Benson, Town of	1	3	33%
Berlin Police Department	11	12	92%
Bethel, Town of	1	1	100%
Bradford Police Department	0	3	0%
Brandon Police Department	4	10	40%
Brattleboro Police Department	24	27	89%
Brighton Police Department	1	2	50%
Bristol Police Department	3	8	38%
Bristol, Town of	1	3	33%
Burlington Police Department	84	91	92%
Caledonia County Sheriff's Office	9	20	45%
Canon Police Department	1	1	100%
Capitol Police Department	3	5	60%
Castleton Police Department	1	9	11%
Chester Police Department	2	9	22%
Chittenden County Sheriff's Office	9	29	31%
Chittenden, Town of	1	1	100%
Colchester Police Department	4	28	14%
Dover Police Department	5	10	50%
Dover, Town of	1	3	33%
Essex County Sheriff's Office	9	15	60%
Essex Police Department	13	33	39%
Fair Haven Police Department	4	14	29%
Fair Haven, Town of	1	3	33%
Fairlee Police Department	0	1	0%
Franklin County Sheriff's Office	7	33	21%
Grand Isle County Sheriff's Office	4	15	27%
Guilford, Town of	1	8	13%
Hardwick Police Department	4	9	44%

Hartford Police Department	16	23	70%
Hinesburg Community Police	4	10	40%
Hyde Park, Town of	1	2	50%
Killington Police Department	0	1	0%
Lamoille County Sheriff's Office	10	33	30%
Ludlow Police Department	2	10	20%
Lyndon, Town of	1	1	100%
Lyndonville Police Department	3	3	100%
Manchester Police Department	6	15	40%
Mendon, Town of	2	2	100%
Middlebury Police Department	4	16	25%
Milton Police Department	9	17	53%
Montpelier Police Department	14	18	78%
Morristown Police Department	5	11	45%
Mount Tabor Police Department	1	2	50%
Mount Tabor, Town of	1	2	50%
Newport Police Department	5	18	28%
Northfield Police Department	8	10	80%
Norwich Police Department	1	6	17%
Orange County Sheriff's Office	8	29	28%
Orange, Town of	1	1	100%
Orleans County Sheriff's Office	8	23	35%
Panton, Town of	1	1	100%
Pittsford Police Department	1	6	17%
Randolph Police Department	4	10	40%
Richmond Police Department	6	7	86%
Royalton Police Department	0	4	0%
Rutland City Police Department	13	38	34%
Rutland County Sheriff's Office	13	40	33%
Rutland Town Police Department	1	4	25%
Shelburne Police Department	4	18	22%
South Burlington Police Department	39	40	98%
Springfield Police Department	8	19	42%
St. Albans Police Department	13	24	54%
St. Johnsbury Police Department	5	17	29%
Stowe Police Department	3	18	17%
Swanton Police Department	2	14	14%
Thetford Police Department	3	4	75%
Tinmouth, Town of	1	2	50%

UVM Police Services	15	23	65%
Vergennes Police Department	4	10	40%
Vermont State Police	323	339	95%
Vernon Police Department	5	8	63%
VT Attorney General's Office	0	4	0%
VT Department of Fish & Wildlife	32	53	60%
VT Department of Liquor Control	4	16	25%
VT Department of Motor Vehicles	8	28	29%
VT Secretary of State	2	6	33%
Wallingford, Town of	1	2	50%
Warren, Town of	1	3	33%
Washington County Sheriff's Office	25	38	66%
Waterbury Police Department	3	8	38%
Weathersfield Police Department	1	3	33%
Weathersfield, Town of	1	1	100%
West Rutland, Town of	1	10	10%
Williston Police Department	8	16	50%
Wilmington Police Department	4	7	57%
Windham County Sheriff's Office	17	34	50%
Windsor County Sheriff's Office	4	24	17%
Windsor Police Department	3	14	21%
Winhall Police Department	6	14	43%
Winooski Police Department	10	21	48%
Woodstock Police Department	5	11	45%
Total:	968	1768	55%