

Team Two was established in 2013 after 3 years of steering committee planning. In 2013, Coordinator Kristin Chandler held 4 Train the Trainer sessions around the state to establish an instructor base. 35 instructors graduated from those initial trainings. In 2014, 8 trainings in 5 regions began what has emerged as an innovative first responder training, unlike any other in the country.

First responders come together for one day to learn about updates in mental health law as it pertains to their work, to run through three different scenarios that they often encounter, to learn about resources available in their region and to hear from a person with lived experience. Small group sessions are facilitated by paired instructors who are the participants' peers. In the last 10 years, Team Two has been presented at International and National conferences on four different occasions. The International Association of Chiefs of Police, the premier annual law enforcement conference with over 1700 participants, has welcomed the Coordinator to present on three occasions in the last 9 years. In 2019, the Coordinator presented at the National Rural Mental Health Conference in Santa Fe and at the RADAR (Response Awareness, De-escalation, and Referral) conference in Seattle.

The Coordinator has established relationships with Chiefs and Sheriffs as well as the training coordinators for Vermont State Police and the Criminal Justice Council, to ensure that law enforcement is aware of this opportunity.

Over the last 12 years, **1906** individuals have participated in Team Two training. This 1906 number reflects 866 law enforcement officers, 684 mental health clinicians, 95 dispatchers, 37 EMTs and 224 "others", who have included state's attorneys, emergency department personnel, veterans outreach workers, shelter workers, and others.

To ensure that each training is robust, balanced and at capacity, the Coordinator solicits participants by reaching out to every police chief and every county sheriff, every Emergency Service Director at the Designated Agencies, as well as specific leaders of intellectual disability teams within those agencies as well as the specialized service agencies. The Coordinator works directly with the Training Coordinator at Vermont State Police. These relationships have been fostered over a long period of time and a large part of the Coordinator's role is to maintain these close relationships with all of the agencies representing first responders in Vermont.

EMTs and dispatchers are solicited as well by the Coordinator. The backbone of Team Two is creating the relationships necessary for a collaborative response, whether it is between EMTs and crisis clinicians, between law enforcement and dispatchers, or between clinicians and law enforcement. The small group setting within the day-long training encourages these relationships, which is what makes Team Two unique. The Coordinator

has identified specific EMT District Coordinators to help spread the word about this free training that is available to all EMTs across the state of Vermont.

Each year, the three scenarios for the training are changed to adapt to current issues facing dispatchers, EMTs, law enforcement and mental health clinicians. Each year, the legal presentation is updated and edited to reflect current practices and new statutes. The Coordinator solicits input from first responders in the field to keep current on how their response to crisis calls is impacted by legislation, rule changes and available resources. These scenarios have been presented on paper, for participants to read in their small groups, by instructors role-playing the scenario, and through the use of video and body camera “real time” calls that are relevant to crisis response.

Each year, the Coordinator rebuilds the instructor base to replace instructors lost to retirement or attrition. In the last 4 years, 19 new instructors have replaced. This effort takes diligence and knowledge of who might make a good instructor and facilitator of small group discussions. At times in the past 12 years, the Coordinator has held additional Train the Trainer courses to ensure the quality of the instruction that participants receive.

In 2019, the Vermont State Police added Team Two training to its mandatory training for troopers.

Each year, the Coordinator recruits persons with lived experience to present at the 6-8 trainings held around the state. For the last three years, this has been realized by the relationship the Coordinator has fostered with Kristy Hommel, of Thetford. Kristy’s presentation within the Team Two training day always receives high marks on evaluations completed by the participants.

The Coordinator teaches the mandatory 8 hour mental health training at the police academy 5-6 times every year, building the curriculum with the clinician and the law enforcement officer who co-teach the course.

The Coordinator co-chaired the Washington County Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT) committee and co-led the CIT training in Washington County over a three year period, resulting in 48 first responders receiving an additional 40 hours of mental health crisis response training. Team Two was deemed to be a pre-requisite for any attendees in the CIT program, so a great deal of coordination with the Washington County CIT Training coordinator took place from 2020-2024.

The Coordinator created an annual Team Two Training News to highlight excellent collaboration among first responders around Vermont. This is published once a year and distributed to Chiefs, Sheriffs, VSP, CEOs of Designated Agencies, the Legislature and media outlets. To accomplish this task, the Coordinator solicits stories from first

responders about cases that went well, ensures that identifying features of the person in crisis is removed, and after editing, works with an administrative person to pull it all together. Photos that have been taken by the Coordinator at all trainings are included, as well as an “instructor spotlight” feature, participant quotes from evaluations and updates on training.

The Coordinator created an annual award to recognize the relationship building and excellent collaboration among first responders. The Frank Silfies Award has been given to a law enforcement officer and to a crisis clinician on an annual basis for the past 8 years. An EMT was also recognized one year. All of the recipients have been peer-nominated and selected by the Team Two Steering Committee after thoughtful discussion. The nominations are solicited by the Coordinator and distributed to Steering Committee members. Agencies and departments have acknowledged that having this award has bolstered morale among staff and offered well-deserved recognition to the entire agency.

The Coordinator established a strong partnership with the Director and producers of “Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops” and presented the film both in person and virtually to several communities in Vermont. As a result of this partnership, in 2020, the Coordinator presented the Team Two concept, along with Ernie Stevens, at the New England State Police Information Network webinar to over 350 participants.

The Coordinator recruits members to serve on the Team Two Steering Committee, with representation from State Police, Sheriffs, Municipal police, NAMI-VT, the Department of Aging and Independent Living, the Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Designated Agencies, and people with lived experience.

Evaluations collected on the day of the training, as well as in a six month follow up survey, consistently reflect that participants truly gain a better understanding of their fellow co-responders’ role, limitations and language, which are all goals of the curriculum.

Evaluation feedback:

“This training has offered resources and ideas about how to help VSP, dispatch, and MH collaborate and communicate in a more efficient way.”

“This training offered abundant insight and knowledge of other agency’s operations and procedures. I valued the guest speakers sharing of lived experiences. This training has helped me learn how to better serve clients.”

“Gaining a better understanding of who others are and how they do their jobs assists in informing how I respond to and work with them.”

“Now that I have a better understanding of what police can and cannot do as well as their perception of situations, I can better support them in supporting clients.”

“The ability to hear how the various responders’ roles are carried out, which will enable us to understand the thought process of others and seek alternatives that can balance the goals of each agency.”

[The best thing about this training is the] “Chance to hear other agency's perspectives through scenarios and learn different limitations and approaches.”