Crisis Recognition And Response

ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics
Question to Consider

- What are the key challenges police officers face when dealing with persons in behavioral crisis?
Behavioral Crisis: A Definition

- An episode of mental and/or emotional distress that is creating instability or danger and is considered disruptive by the community, friends, family or the person him/herself

Adapted from the Seattle Police Department
How Does a Crisis Typically Occur?

- Precipitating event
- Person’s perception of the event
- Normal methods of coping fail
- Resulting in ...
  - Breakdown in control
  - Inability to respond appropriately
  - Feeling overwhelmed

Adapted from Police Training Institute
University of Illinois
Why Should I Care?

- People in crisis need help
- Crises can impact public and officer safety
- It’s our job – to serve and protect
- Reflects mission, values & ethics – sanctity of life
Crisis Recognition And Response

- Why do you want to know what’s behind someone’s erratic behavior?
  - Best approaches to help stabilize the situation
  - What communications strategies to employ
  - What additional resources you may need

*Up-front awareness and recognition are key to a safe and effective response.*
Responding to a Person in Crisis
Crisis Recognition And Response

What the encounter looks like from another perspective
Some Facts about People with Mental Illness

- Biological illness like heart disease or cancer
- Nobody “chooses” to develop a mental illness
- There is no cure, but many people stabilize to live full, productive lives
- Medications help, but they are not perfect and there can be episodes or side-effects

Adapted from Seattle Police Department
People with Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System

- People with serious mental illness can be violent
- But most people with mental illness are not, and never will be, violent
- Jail is often not a helpful place to get stabilized
- Most people, even in a behavioral crisis, respond positively to kind and patient behavior

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Crisis Intervention

- A process to assist individuals in finding safe and productive outcomes to unsettling events

Adapted from Police Training Institute

University of Illinois
Two Principles Guiding Your Response

★ Your mission is not to diagnose or treat/solve underlying issues
★ Your top priority is to verbally *defuse* and *stabilize* the situation, when feasible
Emotional–Rational Thinking Scale
Three-Phase Response Process

- Ensure the scene is safe
- Try to get the person stabilized
- Begin the problem-solving process (often by bringing in other resources)
Crisis Recognition
And Response

- Trying to Defuse a Critical Situation Does Not...
  - Take away your discretion to make an arrest, where probable cause exists
  - Restrict your ability to use force when faced with an imminent threat

But these should be considered last resorts whenever possible
How To Approach Persons in Crisis – Some Practical Tips and Techniques

- Request backup & specialized help
- Don’t rush (unless immediate action needed)
- Continually assess and re-assess
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
  - Have a conversation
  - Clear and simple statements
  - Open-ended questions
  - Active listening
How To Approach Persons in Crisis – Some Practical Tips and Techniques

- Request backup & specialized help
- Don’t rush (unless immediate action needed)
- Continually assess and re-assess
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Watch your body language
- Be aware of “hot buttons” and “hooks”
- Consider “doing the opposite"
- Always be respectful
Your Goal: Make a Connection
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And Response

- Behavioral Change Staircase

Adapted from FBI Behavioral Change Stairway Model
Some Things Not To Do

- Don’t join in the person’s behavior
- Don’t confuse the person
- Don’t diminish the person
- Don’t lie or deceive
- Don’t automatically view non-compliance as a threat
Manage Your own Reactions

- Officers can experience similar physiological changes as a subject in crisis
- Important to consciously slow your breathing, move slowly and smoothly, and stay in control
Crisis Recognition And Response

Appleton, WI
Quick Recap

- There could be many causes for a person to be in crisis – mental illness is one of them.
- Your priority is not to diagnose and resolve the situation – it’s to defuse, stabilize and get help.
Quick Recap

- As emotions rise, rational thinking declines – lowering their emotions helps people think more rationally
- Empathy, communication, respect, making a connection – all about trying to get voluntary compliance
Thoughts?
Questions?
Observations?