

TOWN CLERK PRESENTATION:

Washington County Mental Health will discuss ideas about interacting with individuals who may be in a mental health crisis, some signs and symptoms to look for that might let you know the person is at risk for a crisis, and how to offer support and contact to services.

Over 14,000 calls per year to our screener/emergency line. Lots of interaction going on out there!

802-229-0591- WCMHS Screeners 24/7/365

De-escalation techniques for people who are agitated and experiencing distress

- Calm Demeanor (deep breathing ourselves, being thoughtful about what we say and do...owning our own adrenaline etc.)
- Take time to have a plan (acting quick is important and acting smartly is also important)
- Safe Distance (2 arm lengths)/Body posture non-threatening (hands open and visible, knees bent, relaxed when possible...)
- *90% of emotional information and more than 50% of the total information is communicated not by what one says but by body language, especially tone of voice. (calm tone, nonjudgmental)
- Introduce yourself and use the person's name.
- If possible 1 person verbally interacting with person is helpful. Multiple people communicating can be confusing.
- Be concise and keep it simple. Repetition is helpful. (agitated, distressed people have a difficult time processing information) (i.e. "please walk over here. Please get in the ambulance" etc)
- Identify wants and feelings (what is the person wanting to have happen? What are their needs?)
- **Listen** closely to what the person is saying and empathize. Use active listening 'let me see if I understand clearly...is that right?' (repeat what the person has said...) Be genuine. ("I want to be sure I understood what you just said....repeat...is that correct?") ("I hear that is hard for you." "That must have been really difficult.")
- Clear directions, limits and boundaries

- Balance between being empathetic and being clear about what you're asking the person to do ("please sit here with me.")
- Believe what the person is telling you is true from their perspective (i.e. someone who is delusional and is paranoid the government is spying on them really believes the government is spying on them...)
- Believe the pain is real (because it is for the person...)
- **Respect** (not personal...It's not about us...)
- Offer choices (i.e. would you like to walk to the ambulance this way or would you like to use that path?)
- Take the time when you can take the time
- Avoid Arguments/Power Struggles
- Work as a team

Resources:

Psychological First Aid- <https://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>

Mental Health First Aid- www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org

Could choose to have verbal de-escalation 'champions' within your group- <http://nappi-training.com/>