

Mental Illness Awareness

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

MENTAL ILLNESS (MI) AWARENESS

I. WELCOME

- A. Overview and purpose of the Law Enforcement & Effective Interaction with the Mentally Ill (MI) Class.
 - 1. Complete all required paperwork.
 - 2. Instructor introduces self and provides information on objectives for the course and material that will be covered.

II. MENTAL ILLNESS (MI)/RELEVANCE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

- A. Students learn about the history of treatment/care of MI individuals.
 - 1. Students provided with information on history of treatment/care of MI individuals in California,
 - 2. Instructor led discussion.
- B. Students learn about the connection between MI individuals and law enforcement.
 - 1. Instructors provide students with statistics on utilization of law enforcement resources for MI individuals.
 - 2. Instructor led discussion of students' perceptions of using law enforcement resources to deal with MI.

III. SELF-ASSESSMENT/IMPLICATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT DUTIES

- A. Students learn about the connection between personal opinions regarding MI individuals the outcome of a call for service involving an MI individual.
 - 1. Students discuss personal and professional experiences, perceptions, and responses to dealing with MI individuals.
- B. Students learn about the importance of effectively interacting with MI individuals while performing duties.
 - 1. Students discuss potential consequences of not dealing with MI individuals effectively.
 - 2. Instructor led discussion regarding potential consequences, need for additional techniques and strategies, and career survival.

IV. DEFINITION OF MENTAL ILLNESS (MI)/ ASSOCIATED STIGMA

- A. Students learn about the characteristics and aspects of treatment of MI.
 - 1. Students provided with information on characteristics of MI and use/types of medication used to treat MI.
 - 2. Instructor led discussion.
- B. Students explore the stigma associated with MI.

1. Students participate in group exercise to identify biases and negative stereotypes associated with MI. Students engage in “Truth” or “Myth” exercise in which they are asked to determine whether each one of ten statements regarding MI is true or false. Once answer is revealed, each statement is discussed in detail by facilitator.
2. Instructor led discussion on origin and societal impact on biases and negative stereotypes associated with MI.

V. DEVISING A PLAN/FOUR CATAGORIES/UNIVERSAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Students become aware of how to gather information regarding potentially MI subjects.
 1. Students are provided with examples and discuss the importance of officer safety when dealing with rapidly evolving situations involving MI individuals.
 2. Students provided with lines of questioning to have dispatcher ask the informant/victim on the line. Importance of detailed information discussed.
 3. Students provided with information on identifying behavioral characteristics of MI at the scene of a call.
- B. Students learn about the four basic categories of the signs and symptoms of MI.
 1. Students provided with educational information regarding four basic categories of MI:
 - 1) Elevated/Depressed/Anxious
 - 2) Making Sense/Not Making Sense
 - 3) Agitated/Aggressive
 - 4) Suicidal/Self-Injurious
 2. Instructor led discussion on experiences in the field.
- C. Students learn about the universal considerations for interacting with MI individuals in all categories. Universal considerations as follows: **Window of Opportunity**-Upon initial contact with a MI individual, there may be a short period of time (20 seconds to <2 minutes) that may allow for use of recommended strategies and techniques. Recognizing the window is critical to a positive outcome. **Posture**- Indicates approachability, openness, and willingness to engage). **Rapport**-Provides a sense of safety. Makes MI individual feel comfortable and understood so important information can be gathered. Indicate a willingness to help. Offer first name. Empathize with their experience. If MI individual remains unresponsive, switch. **Vocal Pattern**-Match patterns of vocal tone, volume and speed. To assist individual in hearing, understanding, and attending to your questions/commands, match patterns of vocal tone, volume and speed (i.e., if they speak quietly and slowly, then lower your volume and the tempo of your voice). **Preparing for Use of Force** or preparing to draw your gun may send a threatening or mixed message that can create confusion. **Predictability**- Watch sudden movements. If possible, provide information on what you're about to do; (i.e., “Now I'm going to search you and your belongings”). **Focus**- Slow down the pace. Attempt to have the individual stay with you. Keep individual oriented to the present by using the word “now.” Redirect if necessary. Attempt to have the individual focus on you.
 1. Students provided with educational information regarding four basic categories of MI.
 2. Instructor led discussion on previously used techniques/success.

VI. IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO MENTAL ILLNESS (MI)

- A. Students gain knowledge of signs and symptoms common to each of the four categories of MI

through instructor-provided information, a video clip learning activity, and a group exercise.

1. Students provided with information on signs/symptoms in each category:
 - 1) Elevated/Depressed/Anxious
 - 2) Making Sense/Not Making Sense
 - 3) Agitated/Aggressive
 - 4) Suicidal/Self-Injurious
2. Learning Activity: Students will observe video clips and visual examples of individuals meeting criteria for each category, including a video of MI symptoms from a first-person perspective.
3. Students provided with information on recommended techniques and strategies used to effectively engage MI individuals from each category.
4. Group exercise: case vignettes for each category. Students break into small groups and role play then discuss vignettes illustrating characteristics and techniques for responding in each of four categories.

VII. LIFE EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS (MI)

- A. Students learn about the symptoms, daily living experiences (including those with Law Enforcement), and recovery of individuals dealing with MI.
 1. Panel Discussion: Instructor facilitated discussion based on Questions and Answers. Panel members have received mental health services through the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Questions relate to personal stories, challenges managing mental illness, and experiences with law enforcement.
 2. Instructor led discussion on changed thoughts and perceptions regarding MI individuals and illness and capabilities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

- A. Course summary and wrap up.
 1. Class Q and A and discussion regarding learning objectives and information presented.
 2. Instructor's closing comments and provision of additional resources.
 3. Complete course evaluations.
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