



'A Focus on Understanding & Hope'

Crisis-intervention training aids Chandler police officers

BY THE CITY OF CHANDLER COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Daily news headlines around the nation shine a spotlight on the immense challenges public-safety professionals are facing in their interactions with people impacted by mental health conditions and substance use.

Resolving these challenging encounters in positive and productive ways often requires police officers to have specialized training plus knowledge of and access to a variety of resources in the community.

On Saturday, Sept. 24, the Chandler Police Department will host a free public forum that they hope will better prepare officers for these complex situations and result in better outcomes for everyone involved.

"A Focus on Understanding & Hope" is a resource fair to help educate the public about the stigma surrounding

mental illness and connect people to assistance options in the community. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Chandler Center for the Arts, 250 N. Arizona Ave., and it will feature more than 45 organizations sharing information and offer networking opportunities. There will also be prize giveaways and light refreshments.

Numerous guest speakers will share their stories and expertise on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), physical and mental disabilities, suicide prevention, and substance use disorder, recovery, overdose prevention and more.

Some of the most anticipated presentations at "A Focus on Understanding & Hope" will be abridged crisis intervention training (CIT) courses that will be certified by the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board, also known as AZ POST.

"This event is for police officers, firefighters, military veterans, caregivers, anyone who is affected by mental health challenges and their family members," said Chandler Police Commander David LeVoy. "It will be an educational event, but there will also be opportunities for participants to share their experiences with understanding professionals who can provide assistance and guidance."

Chandler Police Chief Sean Duggan has made crisis intervention training a goal for all of the department's officers.

"This event will give Chandler officers a valuable training opportunity," LeVoy said. "It's also open to public safety personnel from other jurisdictions, because these issues affect every community, and everyone will benefit if we can improve on how we handle these types of encounters."

Some of the most effective lessons

during crisis intervention training are delivered by people with mental health conditions who challenge the assumptions and stereotypes that permeate society. Some of the presentations on Sept. 24 will be through the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the "In Our Own Voice" program. These will be powerful first-hand accounts about the struggles faced by real people, their options for treatment, and the possibility of a bright future.

"There is often a stigma attached to people with mental illness, and events like this one can help those of us in law enforcement learn to reduce our judgments about them and their family members," LeVoy added. "We can all work together to get people the help they need. That will make Chandler a healthier community."



Many Chandler police officers have received crisis intervention training, which better prepares them to speak with people who are undergoing a personal crisis and with family members who may be impacted by the crisis. Pictured is Chandler police Sgt. Mike Moore.



'A Focus on Understanding and Hope' presentations

ADDICTION / SUBSTANCE USE

• What does a substance abuse problem look like?

Hear a personal story of substance abuse and recovery from a local Arizonan, Justin Hermanski, who attended Hamilton High School in Chandler.

• Finding HOPE amid addiction

An in-depth look into the opioid epidemic in Arizona, how it's treated and how we recover.

• Overdose prevention through Naloxone

This workshop will teach community members the skills to recognize an opioid overdose and respond effectively including the use of naloxone.

• RX matters

How to help older adults understand medication misuse, plus tools to help individuals avoid misuse and abuse of prescription medications.

MENTAL HEALTH

• Working with law enforcement

Presenters will discuss the collaborative effort between law enforcement and the behavioral/mental health community to redirect individuals in crisis, away from the criminal justice system and into behavioral health system.

• In our own voice

People with personal experience with mental illness lead a brief,

yet comprehensive and interactive presentation, about mental health. Presented by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

• The Commit Campaign

This short presentation will focus on the mental health awareness campaign working to end the stigma associated with mental health, mental illness and suicide.

CIT / PTSD / SUICIDE

• CIT training

An officer teaches crisis intervention communication skills for fellow law enforcement officers.

• PTSD

An officer shares his personal story of trauma experienced on the battlefield,

and explains how that trauma was suppressed for many years until it was revealed when he faced an unimaginable situation with a suicidal subject.

• Suicide prevention and awareness

Warning signs and symptoms of someone who may be contemplating suicide, and resources for taking intervening steps.

• Trauma and readjustment issues for veterans

A psychologist from the West Valley Veterans Center will present on military-specific PTSD and trauma in relation to combat and military sexual trauma (MST). Readjustment issues common for veterans will be discussed, as well as resources for vets and their family and caregivers.