

Maureen Evans:

I see as a great opportunity is as police officers, when we are responding to a call, we always have a plan, a rule book, almost for each call that we go to. However, when we're dealing with people in crisis, it's a situation that is not always easily controlled and it is fluid and things change as they go along. And there isn't always a set plan or an end game for the officers when they arrive.

So I think that this provides law enforcement with some more options in so far as how to help someone who is in crisis. It gives more of a team mentality that we're not alone in this because although we are getting more and more education and training in mental health and dealing with individuals in crisis, it's still not something that we are specialized in. And the individuals that we're dealing with at times are afraid of the police and they may not want to deal with us. And that adds to the confusion.

There are some people that are having a crisis that might have other issues, such as an outstanding warrant that is a whole separate issue that could be dealt with later, but they're afraid to deal with the police because that might become involved in when we are there to actually help them.

So I would say to keep an open mind about the system, give it time to work, and give it a chance to work and to utilize any interactions that we have in using the system as a way to learn, to educate ourselves so that when we continue to deal with people in crisis, we can do all that much better on the next call.