



CORTLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

Emotionally Disturbed Persons Response Team (EDPRT)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the EDPRT?

The Emotionally Disturbed Persons Response Team (EDPRT) consists of a group of officers specially trained, on a voluntary basis, to deal with emotionally disturbed individuals in a variety of situations in the Cortland community. These situations may include suicidal persons, persons exhibiting irrational behavior, handling psychiatric patients, the homeless, veterans, juveniles and the elderly, and any other situations and/or referrals that deal specifically with the needs of the mental health community and emotionally disturbed persons.

What does the EDPRT do?

Our purpose is to respond to those in crisis and to assist emotionally disturbed and mentally ill individuals in a variety of situations in the Cortland community. Our Team members are specially trained to assess each situation and conduct a mental health intervention for individuals who need emergency care. For those individuals in a non-crisis situation, we try to provide the necessary resources and referrals for them in order to enhance their treatment process.

What is our mission?

It is the mission of the Emotionally Disturbed Persons Response Team (EDPRT) to handle emotionally disturbed and mentally ill individuals in a variety of situations in the Cortland community. The EDPRT will make every effort to preserve the dignity of every individual encountered who is emotionally disturbed/mentally ill, and while doing so will take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of its members, the community, and the emotionally disturbed/mentally ill person. The EDPRT will also provide the necessary resources and referrals for each individual in order to enhance their treatment process. In addition, it is the mission of every individual EDPRT member to ensure that each emotionally disturbed/mentally ill person's physical and mental health is cared for with respect, understanding and compassion. It is also the EDPRT's on-going mission to strengthen community partnerships and empowerment with mental health providers, consumers and community programs/services.

When does the EDPRT respond?

The EDPRT has developed specific criteria that must be met in order for Team members to be dispatched to various 911 or other type calls that may involve individuals with mental health issues. Due to the fact that the EDPRT is not a full time team, meaning team members are still required to respond to all other types of 911 calls that are unrelated to EDPRT type duties, dispatch criteria was established in order for team members to be properly utilized. In

cooperation with the Cortland County Emergency Communications Department (911), 5 dispatch criteria for EDPRT activation was established to include the following:

1. An individual is actively threatening to and/or is inflicting harm upon self/others and is exhibiting signs and/or symptoms of a mental health problem.
2. Request for transport by an authorized agent (i.e. MHL 9.45, 9.60)
3. All completed suicide scenes (for assistance to family members).
4. During any activation of the Crisis Negotiation Team, for purposes of hospital and post procedures involving mental health intervention.
5. As requested by any member of the Cortland Police Department or by members of various mental health agencies/hospitals that have been given a direct link to the EDPRT.

Ideally, an EDPRT officer is dispatched to the 911 call that meets the above criteria and is either accompanied by another EDPRT officer, or another police officer who may not be part of the EDPRT. EDPRT members are trained to take as much time as is needed with an individual in order to provide necessary resources. In addition, it is expected that as the EDPRT grows and becomes known throughout the Cortland community, several local mental health agencies and organizations will have the ability to directly call upon the Team to assist with difficult and complex cases that require police assistance.

Where does the EDPRT respond?

Our team responds to calls within the City of Cortland. However, we may be requested to assist other law enforcement agencies within Cortland County regarding referrals and/or requests for information.

How do we benefit the community?

Although the EDPRT involves extensive training and responds daily to those who are in crisis, the EDPRT is about more than training, suicide intervention, follow-ups, and even saving lives. The EDPRT is also about community involvement, empowerment, and partnerships. One of the Team's main focuses is on diverting individuals toward community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration or hospitalization. To make that happen, the EDPRT works closely with numerous mental health agencies throughout Cortland, as well as partnering with the Cortland County Department of Mental Health. We know that in the days ahead the EDPRT will continue to strengthen these and other relationships through training and case review, and is open to providing information and presentations on the Team and on our mission to any agency in the Cortland community.

How did the EDPRT get started?

In 1988, in Memphis, Tennessee responded to a series of bad outcomes involving police use of force against people with serious mental illness. That year, Memphis Police Department developed a new approach, partnering with mental health colleagues to develop the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). Rather than focusing on blaming someone or something for the bad outcome, Memphis PD decided to develop a novel approach to policing that has spread across the country. 20 years later, nearly every state had at least one CIT; however, NYS had no such team.

In the summer of 2002, the Rochester, NY Police Department (RPD) experienced a number of encounters with individuals known to or believed to have had various mental health issues which subsequently prompted the department to clearly recognize the need for a specialized group of

trained officers to respond to the needs of the mentally ill. Although the department was already in a very early stage of investigating the CIT concept and researching the need for such a team within the RPD, these various encounters increased the Department's level of awareness regarding some of the challenges police often face when dealing with mental illness. In the same year, the RPD appointed Dr. Cedric L. Alexander, a clinical psychologist from the University of Rochester Medical Center and a 19 year veteran of law enforcement, as the new Director of Organizational Development and Administration. Due to both Dr. Alexander's clinical and prior police background, he began to formalize the concept of the EDPRT. It was during this time that Dr. Alexander appointed Sgt. Eric Weaver, an outspoken mental health consumer and advocate, as Coordinator of this project, and then ultimately named him as the EDPRT's Commanding Officer and the Department's Mental Health Coordinator.

After much preparation, cooperation and coordination between many different agencies, the Rochester Police Department held its first EDPRT Basic School March 1-10, 2004. Subsequent schools consisted of 80 hours of extensive police mental health training, making the RPD Basic and Advanced school at the time the largest police mental health training in the United States. All of the schools were overseen by Sgt. Weaver, and were instructed by various law enforcement and mental health professionals from around the Rochester community.

In 2005 members of the Troy, NY Police Department visited RPD to gain an understanding of the EDPRT, and subsequently adopted the Team concept for their Department, and in January 2006, they held their first 40hr. school and launched the Troy PD EDPRT. In April 2010, the Binghamton, NY Police held their first 40hr. school and launched their EDPRT as well.

In 2012, conversations began with the Cortland County Mental Health Department and the Cortland Police Department regarding the possibility of establishing an EDPRT in the City of Cortland. After coordinating with numerous other mental health agencies in the Cortland community, the Cortland County Mental Health Department was able to provide the funding and resources needed to establish the Team and school. In December 2012, Sgt. Weaver was contracted to work with the Cortland Police Department and the Cortland County Mental Health Department to develop and implement the Cortland PD EDPRT. Subsequent annual EDPRT trainings have been held in Cortland. Over the past five years, nearly 80 police officers and other public servants have been trained in EDPRT. Most of those trained are employed in Cortland County but officers from several surrounding counties have taken advantage of the training as well.

How many members currently comprise the EDPRT?

The Cortland Police Department's EDPRT currently consist of a Commanding Officer, 3 Patrol Sergeants, and 21 patrol officers. This is approximately 75% of the patrol division.

How are individuals selected for the EDPRT?

As with many CIT type models, there are numerous qualifications for officers to be eligible for the EDPRT. The EDPRT is similar to any other specialized unit within the Department. Candidates must apply for the team and go through a lengthy interview process, where they are asked relevant questions pertaining to their experience in dealing with individuals who are emotionally disturbed/mentally ill, as well as questions regarding their knowledge of various mental health laws and related issues. During the interview and selection process, potential members are screened for prior experience in working with the mentally ill, their willingness to work with those suffering with emotional disturbance or mental illness, and their overall feelings and attitudes towards mental illness. If an applicant successfully completes the interview/selection process,

he/she will attend the EDPRT school. After successful completion of the school, the individual becomes a member of the EDPRT.

What values must our EDPRT members possess?

Team members must exhibit professionalism, compassion, respect, courtesy, patience, knowledge, leadership, understanding and commitment in working with the mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, and members of the mental health community.

How do we initially train our new members?

The EDPRT has many unique qualities that many other similar type teams do not possess. The first and foremost is in the area of training. The EDPRT School is comprised of 40 hours of intense mental health related training provided by numerous mental health experts from the Cortland community. With nearly 20 various mental health and law enforcement related topics being covered during the training, the EDPRT also includes detailed role-play scenarios as well as intense personal interaction with numerous mental health consumers. Sgt. Eric Weaver, the developer and lead instructor for the Rochester, Troy, and Binghamton EDPRT schools, is also the lead instructor and consultant for the Cortland EDPRT school as well.

What types of subjects are taught?

The 40 hours of training is conducted over 5 consecutive days, and consist of the following courses: Training will consist of various issues in mental health, including:

- Indicators of Mental Illness
- Specific Mental Illnesses
- Personality Disorders
- Juvenile Mental Health Issues
- Elderly Mental Health Issues
- Hospital Protocol/Procedures
- Understanding Suicide/Suicide Intervention
- Communication Skills
- Substance Use/Co-occurring Disorders
- Medications
- Court Systems
- Local Mental Health Resources
- Assisted Outpatient Treatment
- Police Stress
- Community Resources
- Housing
- Veteran's Mental Health Issues
- Mental Health Consumer Interaction
- Mental Hygiene Law
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Role Plays

Who are the instructors for our school?

Psychiatrists, psychologists, other mental health professionals from the Cortland community, as well as members of our local hospital and local mental health agencies provide the training at the EDPRT School. Sgt. Weaver provides all law enforcement/mental health related courses, including officer stress/suicide.

How do our Team members continue to train?

Team members will meet monthly for additional mental health training and Case Review with a mental health professional. Team members are encouraged to attend NYS Department of Criminal Justice schools that will continue to develop their skills/techniques in dealing with the mentally ill/emotionally disturbed, such as the NYS Police Mental Health Instructor Course and the Suicide Prevention/Crisis Intervention Instructor Course given by the NYS Commission of Corrections.

What is the average amount of time an EDPRT member spends with an individual?

EDPRT members are trained to take as much time as is needed with an individual. This, of course, is very different from the normal fast paced activities, where officers often find themselves hurriedly going from one call to another. When dealing with someone who is emotionally disturbed and/or mentally ill, and they are in severe crisis, suicidal or otherwise, EDPRT members recognize through their training, that taking time and slowing down is paramount to a successful resolution to the problem at hand. In other EDPRTs, Team members spend an average of 1.05 hours with each individual they respond for. Overall, officers spend approximately 1.45 hours on each incident they are involved in.

How do we document our contacts?

After each incident, EDPRT members document the individual's information, hospital and doctor information, as well as a detailed description of what occurred and what actions were taken. These 'After Action Reports' are filed with the EDPRT Commanding Officer and may be accessed by EDPRT members only. On selected cases, EDPRT members will also conduct follow-up visits to the home of the individual that they had previous contact with. During the follow-up visit or phone call, which is made several days following an incident, EDPRT members are able to speak with the individual in a much different way than they were able to during the initial contact. Follow up visits are documented on a 'Follow-Up Report'. In addition, as the Cortland PD EDPRT becomes more widely known throughout the Cortland community, it is expected that local mental health agencies and organizations will call upon the Team to assist with difficult and complex cases that require police assistance. On specific occasions, the EDPRT will be called to conduct a Pro-Active Assessment, in which a case and follow-up may be assigned to EDPRT members in order to provide assistance to an individual **before** a severe crisis situation occurs. In this case, the team member meets with the individual and documents their contact on a 'Pro-Active Assessment Report'.

It is our goal to create and maintain an EDPRT electronic database where reports can be entered electronically, which would create access to EDPRT reports to EDPRT officers 24hrs. a day. This database will also enable the Department to track Team statistics, etc.

What agencies do we collaborate with?

We wish to acknowledge the following Cortland community agencies that have helped us make the Cortland EDPRT a reality; Catholic Charities, Family Counseling Services, Mental Health Association, Seven Valley Health Coalition, Wishing Wellness Center, Cortland Co. Prevention Services for Youth.

A special thank you and acknowledgement to Garra Lloyd-Lester, Youth Services Development Director & SPOA (Single Point of Access) Coordinator at the Cortland County Mental Health for his persistence and diligence in helping to establish the EDPRT.

Why has the EDPRT program been successful?

The EDPRT credits its success to the fact that it has helped bridge the gap between law enforcement and the mental health agencies throughout each community they are in. The open communication, partnerships, and working relationships developed between the law enforcement agencies, local hospitals, various agencies, staff members, and consumers, as well as each EDPRT members belief in treating each individual they encounter with dignity, compassion, and respect, has undoubtedly made the EDPRT successful in all that it has done and continues to do.

How to contact the Cortland Police Department's EDPRT?

In the event of an emergency that meets the EDPRT criteria, please call 911 immediately. If available, an EDPRT member will be dispatched. In the event of a non-emergency, or for any questions related to the EDPRT, you may contact Lieutenant: David Guerrero, EDPRT Commanding Officer, at the below address and phone number.

Lieutenant David Guerrero
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