

Mental Illness

Index Code: 1610

Effective Date: 10/19/2021

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for interacting with persons suspected of having mental illness, and seeking accommodations for such persons while maintaining a safe environment for all parties involved.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Office of the Sheriff to ensure that a consistently high level of service is provided to all persons with whom they come in contact with, including those who may suffer from mental illnesses. Agency personnel will afford persons who may have mental illnesses the same rights, dignity, and community services as provided to all citizens.

No single policy or procedure can address all situations in which deputies and other agency personnel may be required to provide assistance to persons with mental illnesses. This policy is intended to address the most common types of interactions with people who may have mental illnesses.

For the purpose of this directive, a mental illness is defined as any of various conditions characterized by impairment of an individual's normal cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, and caused by social, psychological, biochemical, genetic, or other factors such as infection or head trauma.

III. Characteristics of Mental Illnesses

A. While many people with a mental illness control symptoms successfully through the use of medication, therapy, and other means, some do not have access to mental health services, fail to take their medications, or do not recognize that they suffer from a mental illness. Deputies and other personnel must be prepared to deal with situations involving persons who have mental illnesses and know how to respond to these situations in an appropriate and sensitive manner, symptoms of mental illness may include, but are not limited to:

1. Accelerated actions
2. Confusion
3. Delusions
4. Depression
5. Hallucinations
6. Hopelessness
7. Hyperactivity
8. Incoherence
9. Loss of memory