

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Lynsey Billet
lynsey@anatgerstein.com
(717) 841-5101

Carla Rabinowitz
crabinowitz@communityaccess.org
(212) 780-1400, ext. 7726



Mental Health Advocates Call on NYPD to Change Response System for People Experiencing Emotional Distress

– Organizations call on the NYPD to double number of officers receiving Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), redeploy trained CIT officers in response to Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP) calls, and build citywide diversion centers

(New York, NY, 11/14/16) – Following the death of Deborah Danner, the Bronx woman recently killed by the police, a coalition of organizations and advocates rallied on the steps of City Hall to call on the NYPD to change how it responds to Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP) calls.

The coalition, led by Community Access – a mental health and housing nonprofit – was instrumental in forcing the NYPD to adopt Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) last year. They are now calling for an expansion of that program and other changes that will enable the NYPD to respond in more humane and safer ways to people experiencing emotional distress.

The coalition called on the NYPD to increase the number of police officers who receive CIT from 4,500 to 10,000, supporting a more effective response to crisis situations involving people experiencing emotional distress. The coalition also called on the NYPD to route EDP related calls to CIT trained officers instead of the Emergency Services Unit (ESU). They also urge the establishment of the two drop off centers outlined in the Thrive NYC roadmap.

The coalition was joined by community members and friends of Deborah Danner who was recently killed by the police in the Bronx. “We cannot act quickly enough. Deborah Danner wrote, “Is it a delusion...that I am worthy of respect and a ‘normal happy life’?” Let’s make our answer clear to all who live with a serious mental illness in New York City,” said **Harvey Rosenthal, executive director of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services.**

“The ESU is the only group of officers to currently respond to CIT calls. They are insufficient in number and are not geared to respond to New Yorkers with mental health concerns. ESU handles incidents involving force that require aggression; they have not been trained in the newer CIT training that teaches compassion. We need a change,” said **Carla Rabinowitz, Advocacy Coordinator at Community Access.**

“We are heartbroken about the death of Deborah Danner, who bravely struggled to find dignity and acceptance in her struggle with mental illness only to be fatally shot by a NY police officer,” said Rosenthal.

“Through Thrive NYC, the City has taken a number of important steps to improve criminal justice system responses to people with mental illnesses, including implementing best practice Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. As the number of trained officers grow, we want to ensure that when a family or community member calls 911 about a person experiencing a crisis, they can count on a CIT trained officer responding to the situation,” said **Wendy Brennan, Executive Director, NAMI-NYC Metro.**

About Community Access:

Community Access’ mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives. www.communityaccess.org

###