

For Immediate Release

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CCITNYC Urges Mayor to Reform the City’s Response to Mental Health Crises Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Correct Crisis Intervention Today – New York City (CCIT-NYC) has issued the following statement:

(New York, NY, 6/3/20) – Fighting to reform New York City’s response to mental health crises, CCITNYC calls on Mayor de Blasio to do more during the pandemic to limit mental health crises and ensure that all such crises are responded to by trained healthcare workers.

COVID-19 has uprooted the lives of all New Yorkers and caused unspeakable sorrow to the friends and families of the more than 100,000 Americans who have died during this pandemic.

The drastic changes so many are experiencing – especially the social isolation – have caused an epic mental health crisis.

New York City’s mental health crisis line, NYC Well, has seen a 250% increase in calls, and New York State needed to add a new telephone hotline for mental health concerns.

People severely impacted by the death of a loved one, illness, job loss, food insecurity, or other related hardships brought on by the pandemic are at risk of a mental health crisis. These crises will continue to skyrocket long after the city returns to “normal.”

The City must anticipate the demand for emotional resources. It is essential to develop more preventative care, such as mental health urgent care centers, peer-staffed respite centers, and affordable housing.

Now is also the time to change the way the City responds to mental health crisis calls, like those pertaining to a person walking in traffic, or a woman screaming in her apartment, or from a worried mom whose adult son has just started to break parts off a piece of furniture.

The police should not respond to these calls. Police are not trained to address mental health crises. Police investigate and arrest people. Health professionals are needed to respond to health calls.

In the past four years alone, even with extensive crisis intervention training, police shot and killed 16 people experiencing mental health crises. Another three were shot and arrested. Even

under the best of circumstances, the police forcibly handcuff people in crisis and transport them to chaotic emergency rooms. This city can and must do better for those in acute distress.

Now more than ever, it is time for the City to remove police from the equation, and replace them with experienced, trained healthcare responders. CCITNYC urges the City to pilot a model where an Emergency Medical Technician, along with a peer with lived mental health experience and trained in crisis de-escalation, will respond to the mental health crisis calls typically fielded by 911. This is a tried and true approach from other cities that has saved not only the lives of people experiencing mental health crises but also the lives of police officers.

Now is the time for an alternative to a police response to mental health crisis calls and healthcare matters to prevent more needless trauma and deaths.

About Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (www.ccitnyc.org)

Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC is a coalition of 80 organizations and 400 stakeholders whose mission is to transform how the City responds to mental health crises by diverting responses to mental health recipients away from law enforcement.

About Community Access (www.communityaccess.org)

Community Access, one of the coalition's leaders, is a 46-year-old nonprofit that helps people living with mental health concerns by providing quality, supportive housing and award-winning peer-led employment training and other outreach and recovery services.

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