

PRESS RELEASE



**Michael O'Keefe, District
Attorney
Cape & Islands District
3231 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630
(508) 362-8113
FAX (508) 362-8221**

Contact: Michael O'Keefe, District Attorney
Michael A. Trudeau, First Assistant District Attorney
Chief Mark Pawlina, Chatham
Ron Holmes, Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Provider Coalition of CC & the Islands

July 14, 2015

Cape & Islands District Attorney Michael O'Keefe, Chatham Chief of Police Mark Pawlina, on behalf of the Cape Cod Chiefs of Police, and Ron Holmes, Steering Committee Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Provider Coalition of Cape Cod and the Islands announced today the creation of a new initiative for processing criminal cases which may involve a person living with mental illness.

The Mental Health Concern Notification System enables law enforcement personnel to take certain information contained in the regular police report and put it on a special form designed for this system. The form is simply for the purpose of notification to the District Attorney's office for an expedited review of the case and the possibility of alternative processing.

It is important to note that the information contained on the "Notification Form" would normally be included in a police report. Law enforcement personnel will not be making a determination of any kind regarding the person's mental health but simply calling attention to a concern.

By working together to provide police and prosecutors with basic information about individuals with mental health issues, street encounters and court appearances with these individuals will be more positive.

Police and court personnel will be able to contact case workers and service providers that can get involved early and address any concerns before they escalate.

"While the 'Notification Form' might appear simple and straight forward, it speaks volumes of the ongoing and continued collaboration between mental health providers, law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office," said Michael A. Trudeau, First Assistant District Attorney.

“Law enforcement agencies recognize the importance of persons afflicted with mental health issues to get the proper care and treatment they need. Even in situations where an arrest is necessary, the need for treatment does not go away. We understand the need for treatment of arrestees with mental health issues as a potential alternative to criminal prosecution and incarceration when appropriate. The notification system between police agencies and the District Attorney’s office is a positive step forward in developing longer term solutions for those afflicted with mental illness,” said Chatham Police Chief Mark Pawlina.

“The Behavioral Health Provider Coalition of Cape Cod & the Islands strongly supports the effort of the Cape & Islands District Attorney’s Office and area police departments to create an alternative approach for the processing of criminal cases which may involve a person with a mental health issue. We commend District Attorney Michael O’Keefe, First Assistant District Attorney Michael Trudeau and Chatham Police Chief Mark Pawlina for leading this effort.

It is increasingly recognized to a significant degree that such individuals should be considered for treatment instead of strict incarceration. Some jurisdictions in Massachusetts actually have a Mental Health Court and while it is hoped that the Cape and Islands will at some point be the beneficiary of such a judicial system, the Mental Health Concern Notification System is the next best thing and represents a huge step for our community toward establishing better practices for considerate treatment of individuals living with mental illness,” said Ron Holmes, Steering Committee Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Provider Coalition of Cape Cod and the Islands.

(Attached please find a sample Notification Form)

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CHATHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

249 GEORGE RYDER ROAD
CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02633-2099
508-945-1213 • 508-945-7471 FAX



MARK R. PAWLINA
CHIEF OF POLICE

CONFIDENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN NOTIFICATION FORM

The following confidential information is being supplied to the District Attorney's Office in this case for consideration of a possible mental health issue.

Name of Defendant/Arrestee:

DOB:

Charge(s):

CPD Report/Arrest #:

Describe Behavior:

Mental Health Factors/Information (if known):

Are Mental Health Services Currently Being Received? Yes No Unknown

Name of Mental Health Service Provider (if known):

Mental Health Service Provider Contact Information (if known):

Comments:

Name/code of Arresting Officer: