

	STAMFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT  POLICY AND PROCEDURE GENERAL ORDER	Distribution	General Order Number
		ALL PERSONNEL	<b>5.06</b>
Order Title:  <b>MENTALLY ILL AND HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS</b>		Original Issue Date	Effective Date
		<b>12/01/21</b>	<b>12/10/21</b>
		Accreditation Standard:	Section
		POSTC: N/A	5
		Section Title PATROL FUNCTIONS	
Rescinds:		<b>Timothy Shaw, Chief of Police</b>	

*This General Order is for departmental use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This General Order should not be construed as creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this General Order will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.*

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines, policies, and procedures for Stamford Police Department (“Stamford” or “Department”) members for the handling of persons who, due to mental illness, present a danger to themselves or others and cannot meet their basic needs or ordinary demands of life.

## II. POLICY

Mental illness or homelessness is not a crime and does not, in itself, justify or require police intervention. Many mentally ill persons are capable of functioning on their own without danger to themselves or others. When persons appear to be mentally ill, however, the Department’s primary concern shall be to protect the mentally ill person and other citizens.

## III. DEFINITIONS

**Mentally Ill Individual:** A person who has a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality, or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.

**Homeless Individual:** An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or has a primary nighttime residency that is: (1) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, or (2) A private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

## IV. PROCEDURES

### A. Protective Custody

Connecticut General Statutes Section 17a-503 permits law enforcement officers to take into protective custody individuals who require treatment if the law enforcement officer has reasonable cause to believe that a person is mentally ill, and, who as a result of that mental illness, is a danger to himself/ herself or others or gravely disabled and in need of immediate care and treatment.

### B. Recognizing abnormal behavior

1. Mental illness is often difficult for even the trained professional to define in a given individual. Officers are not expected to make judgments of mental or emotional disturbances but rather to recognize behavior that is potentially dangerous or destructive to self or others.
2. When Stamford officers are confronted with a situation involving a mentally ill individual, the officer should try to gain as much background information about the individual as possible. Some of the signs to help recognize mental illness in a person relate to significant changes in behavior. These include:
  - a. Others saying that the person is not “him/herself;”
  - b. They may behave in a way dangerous to themselves or to others;
  - c. They may withdraw into themselves, talking only to themselves;
  - d. Mentally ill persons may show signs of strong and unrelenting fear of persons, places, or things.
  - e. They may have sensations that are not based on reality, such as:
    - (1) Visions, strange odors, peculiar tastes or voices
    - (2) Unrealistic ideas or grand thoughts about themselves
    - (3) Believing that they are worthless (extreme depression)
    - (4) Delusions (unrealistic ideas) about the world
    - (5) Exaggerate events that occur
    - (6) Believe the world is more unfriendly than it is
    - (7) Strange losses of memory or not know the time, or where or who they are
3. The types of impaired (abnormal) behavior that can be dangerous are the violent and depress/suicidal characteristics or where physical illness or loss of memory is involved.

4. A supervisory officer will be dispatched to the incident and shall determine if the individual is a "person requiring treatment. The officer shall execute a written request for emergency examination detailing the circumstances under which the person was taken into custody, and such request shall be left with the facility. The individual shall not be held in jail and the incident shall not be documented in an arrest report.
5. Officers shall complete an Incident Report for documentation and forward to the Behavioral Health Unit for follow-up.

C. Dealing with the Mentally Ill

Should the officer determine that an individual may be mentally ill and a potential threat to themselves, the officer, or others, or may otherwise require law enforcement intervention; the following responses provide general guidelines. (Officers shall also refer to General Order 7.06, Crisis Intervention Team, for incidents involving individuals with mental or behavioral health problems.)

1. Take steps to calm the situation. Where possible, eliminate emergency lights and sirens, disperse crowds, and assume a quiet non-threatening manner when approaching or conversing, with the individual;
2. Move slowly and do not excite a person in mental health crisis. Provide reassurance that the police are there to help and that they will be provided with appropriate care;
3. Avoid topics that may agitate the individual and guide the conversation toward subjects that help bring the individual back to reality;
4. Always attempt to be truthful with the individual. If a subject becomes aware of deception, they may withdraw from contact in distrust and may become hypersensitive or retaliate in anger.

D. Accessing Available Community Mental Health Resources

1. Stamford employees should be aware of available community mental health resources in the area. A listing of some of these agencies is kept in the Dispatch Center, and includes:
  - The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services through the Franklin S. Dubois Center 203-388-1600
  - Crisis Intervention 203-358-8500 or 1-800-586-9903
  - Stamford Hospital 203-276-7777 E.R.
  - Alzheimer's Safe Return Program: 1-800-272-3900
  - Stamford Department of Human Services 203-977-4050

E. Conveyance when Presented with a Court Ordered Admission

When a court determines that there is probable cause to believe that an individual has “psychiatric disabilities” and is dangerous to himself or herself or others, or gravely disabled, that court may order that such an individual be taken into custody and transported to a general hospital for examination. Under these circumstances, the officer shall take the individual named in the document into protective custody and convey the individual to the appropriate treatment facility for examination.

V. HOMELESS PERSONS

While it is clear that all homeless persons are not mentally ill, it is evident that many persons who are homeless suffer from varying degrees of mental illness and/or substance abuse.

A. Procedure for Homeless Persons

At any time, and for any reason, a Stamford officer may approach a homeless person, who has not been observed engaging in any criminal activity, to advise him or her of shelters, services, or assistance, which are currently available. The homeless person may or may not accept the advice or referral and may even walk away from the officer. The homeless person is under no legal obligation to remain and is free to walk away. The sole rationale is to proactively provide referrals to the homeless.

B. Transporting Homeless Persons

Officers may transport homeless persons to homeless shelters when the person accepts such referrals. The homeless person shall be searched for weapons before being transported. Officers transporting a homeless person to any shelter shall comply with the intake procedures of the chosen organization.

C. Arrests

Arrests of all persons, including those defined as homeless, shall comply with all applicable laws and departmental policies and procedures. However, when encountering a homeless person who has committed a misdemeanor law violation (e.g., begging, etc.) where the continued freedom of the individual would not result in disorderly conduct or a more serious offense, officers are encouraged to utilize referral services or other appropriate social service agencies in lieu of a physical arrest. It must be recognized that such referral is contingent on the voluntary agreement of the homeless person to accept such referral. The discretion to make a physical arrest of a person determined to be homeless for misdemeanor violations shall be the responsibility of the individual officer.

**5.06 Revision History**

December 10, 2021 (New) - TS