

The Post-Journal

Meeting Weekly

**New Program To Network Services For Those In
'Dangerous Living Situation'**



Attendees Steve Kilburn (Public Health) and Melody Dejohn (COI Mobile Crisis) are role-playing a scenario through the Situation table process.

A new collaboration among county agencies to help people in severe situations will soon be underway, thanks in part to leadership by the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office.

Starting May 14, a group called the "Situation Table" will begin meeting weekly. Their focus is to identify individuals who live in environments of high elevated risk, including, but not exclusive to, those who are homeless.

Once identified, the goal is to direct those people to agencies that can help.

"It's not problem solving," explained Vito Randazzo with the Sheriff's Office, who is the director of the CARES Center, where released inmates can go in Mayville to get immediate services.

The beginnings of the Situation Table goes back to August of 2024, when the Sheriff's Office held a half-day law enforcement summit on networking.



Pictured are the attendees that attended the 2 Day Situation Table Training held at JCC in April, representing 20 different agencies in the county.

Along with law enforcement, attendees included those from public and behavioral health organizations.

“The idea was talking about diversion deflection, involving law enforcement and behavioral health and how we can help people and divert people away from the criminal justice system,” Randazzo said.

Then in November the Sheriff's Office held a two-day summit for deflection training involving similar organizations at the August event.

"It expanded our half-day summit we had. We had law enforcement and behavioral health, looking at how we can work together with individuals," Randazzo explained.

Finally, in April a Situation Table two-day training event took place. Randazzo said the purpose was to focus on "individuals identified in the community that are considered a high elevated risk."

The people can be individuals, who are not receiving any assistance, but are struggling with physical health, behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse, and more.

"(They have a risk) of death or something bad happening to them," Randazzo said.

Agencies represented at the training included: Dunkirk Police Department, Chautauqua County Probation, Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office, Recovery Options Made Easy (ROME), The Resource Center, UPMC Chautauqua, Brooks Memorial Hospital, Safe Point Lighthouse, UCAN City Mission, YWCA, Chautauqua County Mobile Crisis (Day Team), Southern Tier Environments Living Inc. (STEL), Chautauqua County Department of Social Services, Salvation Army, COI Mobile Crisis (After Hours Team), Chautauqua County Public Health, Healthy Community Alliance, Chautauqua County Mental Hygiene, Jamestown Treatment Court, and Chautauqua CARES.

The training was facilitated by Scott Allen, retired Chief of Police of the East Bridgewater Police Department in Massachusetts, and Tim Quigley from Cordata Healthcare Innovations, Inc.

When the Situation Table meets, members bring identified individuals to the group. When they're first brought up, no names are provided, but basic descriptions are given, including the community that they're living in and the challenges they face.

The purpose of not revealing names immediately, Randazzo explained, is to stay compliant with federal HIPAA laws, keeping individuals' protected health information private.

Once the group decides that, yes, this individual is living in a high risk situation, then the name is shared with police, who are not bound by HIPAA laws, along with organizations that can provide a service. Others are asked to leave.

Those remaining develop a plan of how to get that person connected for needed assistance.

The weekly meetings are expected to last 30 minutes or less.

The Situation Table does not take nominations from the general public. Individuals who want to make a referral of a person to the Situation Table are recommended to make that suggestion to law enforcement and that agency can bring the name forward.

Randazzo said while there are other Situation Tables throughout the country, he believes this group will be the first one for New York state.

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