Transcript of San Mateo County Mental Health Assessment and Referral Team (SMART) Program

Introduction

Chief Don Mattei: Hi, my name is Don Mattei. I’m the police chief of the City of Belmont. I’m also the president of the San Mateo County Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Association. The DVD that you’re going to view today is important. It’s important because you, the officers, are the primary gatekeepers for the San Mateo County mental health system. You confront, you engage, and you talk to people in need every day – and sometimes a question from the street or from your perspective is, “What happens to these individuals?” Hopefully the DVD will give you a better understanding of how to better deal with individuals who are in crisis.

Captain Dan DeSmidt, Belmont Police Department: The SMART Program came about through a collaboration between the San Mateo County Health Department, AMR (American Medical Response), San Mateo County Human Services Agency, and local law enforcement agencies in San Mateo County. The goal of this program is to manage people who are having behavioral emergencies. This means getting the person to the services that they need. Before SMART started, law enforcement really had very few choices when it came to these kind of cases. Basically, in California, we could put them on a 5150 hold, arrest them, or really do nothing. Through the SMART Program, we hope to give you the tools to deal with these problems in your communities.

Part One

(Man is lying on a park bench; a Police Officer walks up.)

Homeless Man: Out here, cold, wet . . . .

Police Officer: Do you want to hurt yourself? Do you want to kill yourself?

Homeless Man: I don’t care, sure, what the, it doesn’t matter to me. Whatever happens.

Police Officer: You feel like hurting somebody else?

Homeless Man: Ah, I don’t care, no.

Police Officer: You don’t care?

Homeless Man: I don’t care . . . I’ll hurt myself – whatever – if you want (mumbling).

Police Officer: Headquarters 1-5-2.

Headquarters: 1-5-2 Headquarters, go ahead.
Police Officer: Check to see if the SMART vehicle is available. I’ll be doing a 5150.

(Sound of vehicle driving up.)

Paramedic: Hey, George! Sit up for me. How you doing? What’s going on?

Homeless Man: Ah, you know (coughing).

Narration: While George is a Code 2, you should call for a Code 3 ambulance if (1) the patient is so violent four-point restraints are needed, or (2) the person has a medical problem such as a drug overdose or cut wrists. A Code 3 response will be a 911 ambulance and fire-first responder. You should call for a Code 2 response if the patient isn’t violent or unmanageable. It’s important to tell the dispatcher if the person can’t walk or sit up because a SMART car is similar to a police car, with a caged-in back seat.

(The sound of someone “dialing” someone on a phone.)

SMART Clinician: Hi, this is Pernille.

Paramedic: Hey, Pernille – Hey, it’s Tim. How you doing?

Pernille: Hey, Tim. What’s up?

Paramedic: I’m out here with George . . . yeah, George . . . I think it’s Anyman, I’ve dealt with him before. Is he in our system at all?

(The SMART Clinician is in her office in front of a computer.)

Pernille: I think I just heard about him in a meeting, but hold on, let me get out of this and I’ll get in there. (Sound of typing on a keyboard.) Yep, that’s him. Okay, so, let me call the clinic, because I know they’ve been really concerned about him. He’s homeless, and we’ve been trying to hook him up with shelter service. So, let me call the clinic and get that hooked up, and I’ll get the outreach and support team to also be involved so we can try and get him safe and get him back on his meds, okay?

Paramedic: All right, Pernille. Thanks for your help.

Pernille: If you have any problems, give me a buzz . . . alright . . . take care, Tim. Bye, bye. (Hanging up phone.)
(Paramedic and the Police Officer are standing in front of the homeless man, who is sitting on the bench.)

Paramedic: So, he’s been missing some appointments. He’s supposed to get his meds – obviously, he hasn’t been taking them.

Homeless Man: (Coughing, closing his jacket around himself.)

Paramedic: Pernille went ahead and got hold of the mental health clinic he goes to; they can see him in about an hour. They’ll fix his prescriptions – we’ll get his meds. So, I’ll go ahead and take him down – I can take him to his appointment.

Police Officer: Okay, so I don’t need to fill out any forms or anything like that?

Paramedic: Nope. Nope.

Police Officer: I can just make sure that –

Paramedic: We’re ready to go, so long as he gets in the car safely, we’ll be all right.

Police Officer: Come on, George.

(The Police Officer and Paramedic help George to his feet.)

Narration: Besides mental health clients like George, other people who can benefit from the SMART Program are those of all age groups with developmental disabilities, depression, and drug and alcohol problems.

Part Two

(Video plays of a woman walking around a liquor store, looking at various bottles of liquor on the shelves. She looks around, then places a bottle inside her coat. She continues to walk around the liquor store for a moment before casually walking out the door. There is the sound of a “ping” as she exits; once outside the liquor store, she says, “Oh, nice.” She is next seen standing in front of a tall, wrought-iron fence.)

Approaching Voice: Hello, there.

Woman: Hi.

Police Officer: Hi. What have you got there?

Woman: Oh, what, nothing.
Police Officer: What are you trying to hide? I’m with the Police Department, Bill McGuigan. What are you hiding here?

(Officer (Corporal) McGuigan approaches the woman.)

Woman: Oh, nothing, nothing.

Officer McGuigan: Well, the store called me because they said someone matching your description stole some alcohol from inside the store –

Woman: Oh, wow.

Officer McGuigan: You’re hiding something under your coat. What do you have with you?

Woman: Oh, okay, I did. I’m sorry. (Woman pulls bottle of alcohol out of coat.)

Officer McGuigan: So you went in the store and you took this? (Woman hands bottle to Officer McGuigan.)

Woman: Yeah, I needed a drink.

Officer McGuigan: Needed a drink?

Woman: Yeah.

Officer McGuigan: Okay.

Woman: Yea, having a bad day.

Officer McGuigan: What’s your name?

Woman: Gloria.

Officer McGuigan: Gloria?

Gloria: Yeah.

Officer McGuigan: Okay, Gloria, I’m Bill McGuigan with the Belmont Police Department.

Gloria: How can I help you sir?

Officer McGuigan: Well, the store wants to press charges for you for stealing this –

Gloria: Ah . . .
Officer McGuigan: So, I need you to please turn around for me –

Gloria: That’s not necessary –

Officer McGuigan: Put your hands behind your back. (Officer McGuigan places Gloria under arrest.)

(Gloria is next seen sitting in a room next to a desk; Officer McGuigan approaches and sits down at the desk.)

Officer McGuigan: All right, Gloria. I’ve had a chance to do a little more follow-up on you and check our records and stuff, and I see that we’ve had a lot of contact with you, as well as other agencies, and it looks like you’re getting mental health services. What’s going on there?

Gloria: Yeah, hmm-hmm, about a month and a half ago.

Officer McGuigan: About a month and a half ago?

Gloria: Yeah, I was on meds. I lost my insurance, and that’s why I went to steal the bottle – I just need some liquor. I have too much anxiety.

Officer McGuigan: Too much anxiety?

Gloria: Yeah.

Officer McGuigan: You seem pretty nervous right now.

Gloria: Yeah, and alcohol would have calmed me down. Just ... yeah . . . .

Officer McGuigan: Are you seeing a mental health professional?

Gloria: I, I was and, um, I lost everything – my children – the father has custody — I would like to have them again. And I need to change my life. I just don’t know what to do, where to go anymore.

Officer McGuigan: Sounds like you got a lot of stress, your kids –

Gloria: Yeah.

Officer McGuigan: – and you’re not taking your meds right now?

Gloria: No, I need to get back on my meds.
Officer McGuigan: Get back on your meds?

Gloria: Yeah, I’m bipolar, and they were experimenting with some different medications to find the right one for me, but I didn’t give it a chance, I just went to the street and –

Officer McGuigan: Yeah, I’m part of the CAT Crisis Intervention –

Gloria: Oh.

Officer McGuigan: – and –

Gloria: Okay.

Officer McGuigan: I think we might be able to help you here, if you wouldn’t mind signing this form. What this form will do it will allow us to get information about you from the mental health professionals and other agencies –

Gloria: Oh.

Officer McGuigan: – and we can all work together to try to help you resolve this problem – maybe work it out where you stay on your meds, and resolve these issues like that –

Gloria: That would be great, yeah, that would be awesome.

Officer McGuigan: If you could sign right here.

Gloria: I have to change already.

(Gloria signs the form.)