

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. CHARLES COUNTY CORRECTIONS HOSTS REGIONAL CRISIS INTERVENTION TRAINING FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – Sixteen officers from the St. Charles County Corrections Department graduated last week from a United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Crisis Intervention Training program with skills that will help them more effectively communicate and manage individuals in custody who are suffering from mental illness or mental health issues. Skills, according to Corrections Director Dan Keen, that are needed more and more frequently.

“Statistics from the DOJ show there are more individuals incarcerated who are suffering from mental illness than in any of the mental health facilities in the United States,” Keen says. “And it’s not just happening everywhere else. It’s here – in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area.”



Thirty-five correctional employees St. Charles, St. Louis and Jefferson counties and St. Louis City graduated from an intense 5-day, 40-hour Crisis Intervention Training program hosted by the St. Charles County Department of Corrections.

Keen says, on average, the mental health team at the jail visits with 565 inmates each month. Since January, 281 inmates have been on suicide watch and 34 percent of the current population is on psychotropic medication.

Recognizing the importance of facing this challenge head on, St. Charles County hosted the DOJ’s National Institute of Corrections (NIC) training program recently, inviting corrections personnel from St. Louis City, St. Louis County and Jefferson County to join its employees in the training. The 5-day, 40-hour course focuses on teaching how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, understanding medications and special populations, the importance of connecting with families of inmates, active listening skills and de-escalation techniques.

“We need to be proactive in our training so we can meet the needs of these individuals and their families,” Keen says. “And knowing their needs is the first step to helping them get out of prison and the appropriate care they need in the community. In addition to not always getting them the help they need, keeping them in prison is costly to taxpayers and creates behavioral management issues for staff.”

According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating barriers to the timely and effective treatment of severe mental illness, mentally ill inmates remain in jail longer than other inmates because of behavioral issues, and they are more likely to commit suicide.

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Keen says his next step is to work with other correctional administrators from St. Louis City and St. Louis and Jefferson counties to develop a metropolitan crisis intervention team training group. He says these counties could pool their resources to ensure that all correctional officers and staff have the opportunity to receive crisis intervention programming.

In addition to educating staff, Keen's goal is to add programs for all inmates to assist in rehabilitation. "It is vital to the safety of our community that we have education, life skill and support programs for those incarcerated to ensure that upon release, they can be more productive, crime-free members of the community," Keen says.

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About St. Charles County:

Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state's third largest county in both population and economic share. It is home to 15 scenic county parks encompassing more than 3,643 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With a population of 395,504, St Charles County is home to large employers including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County Government employs nearly 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit sccmo.org