

Enterprise PD learns about mental health

By Cassie Gibbs cgibbs@southeast.sun.com | Posted: Tuesday, June 16, 2015 11:26 am

Members of the Enterprise Police Department are learning about mental health first aid in an eight-hour course that will be held over four days.

In the PowerPoint for the course, mental health first aid is described as "the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves."

The course, which began on Monday, June 15, is training officers to become mental health first responders by teaching them how to identify a person with a mental illness and handle a situation with a person who is mentally ill.

Officers learned about mental illness through lecture, discussion and classroom participation.

"It's interactive," Sgt. Billy Haglund, EPD's public information officer, said. "We don't just sit there and learn."

Officers also learned about specific types of mental illness, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and substance abuse.

Staci Wilson, marketing director for the South Central Alabama Mental Health Center and teacher for the training course, said this training is meant to educate people about mental illness.

"It is to raise public awareness and decrease the stigma about mental illness," Wilson said. "With budget cuts, people will see an increase of people with mental illness in the community. This is to help others learn about mental illness."

During the course, participants learn about the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan, or ALGEE, to help handle a situation with a person who has a mental illness.

The plan teaches participants to assess the risks of the situation; listen to the person involved with no judgment; give reassurance; encourage the person to get the appropriate help; and, encourage the person to use any of the self-help strategies, which include going to peer groups and ending alcohol and drug usage.



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A group of officers have a discussion about the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan, or ALGEE, during an eight-hour training course on Monday, June 15.

Haglund said the department has not had problems or major situations involving people with mental illness; it is preparing for any possible situations in the future.

"This is more to help mitigate any problems in the future," Haglund said. "This is just the first step. "

Haglund also said the department will have training in other areas in the future.

"We will keep going forward with additional training as well," Haglund said.

The course also provides tips on how to help someone with mental illness: approach the person in a caring and nonjudgmental way; let the person know you are concerned and want to help; be sensitive to the way the person is behaving; let the person know you are available to talk in the future; and, respect the person's privacy and confidentiality.

For more information about the mental health first aid course or mental illness, visit the SCAMHC website at www.scamhc.org, or contact Staci Wilson at (334) 428-5044.