I. Purpose: To provide Law Enforcement Officers with the trauma-informed strategies and de-escalation practices necessary to effectively intervene with persons experiencing a mental health crisis in a manner that provides assistance to persons in need, protects the individual(s), family, and community, and safeguards the officers involved in the encounter.

II. Policy:

The Bennington Police Department (BPD) shall:

A. Strive to maintain the safety and dignity of the individual(s) in crisis, the family member(s), the officer(s), and others responding, as well as the community at large.

B. Ensure that BPD officers receive regular and comprehensive training in responding to persons experiencing a mental health crisis, and trainings should be taught by or include members of agencies providing Community Resources.

C. Collaborate and meet with appropriate community partners regularly to strengthen the community response and resources available to persons and family members in crisis. The goal of the collaboration is to more effectively respond to mental health crises regardless of time or location by utilizing community resources including, but not limited to United Counseling Service, Turning Point Recovery Center, Bennington Project Independence, and the Southwest Vermont Medical Center.

III. Definitions:

A. Mental Health Crisis: An event or experience in which an individual's normal coping mechanisms are overwhelmed, causing them to have an extreme emotional,
physical, mental, and/or behavioral response. Symptoms may include, but are not
limited to, emotional reactions such as fear, anger, grief, or excessive giddiness,
suicidal behaviors; psychological impairments such as inability to focus, confusion,
or nightmares, and potentially even psychosis; physical reactions like
vomiting/stomach issues, headaches, dizziness, excessive tiredness, or insomnia;
and/or behavioral reactions including the trigger of a “freeze, fight, or flight”
response. Any individual can experience a crisis reaction regardless of previous
mental health history.

B. Community Resources: Resources available to the police and/or members of the
community including without limitation mental health professionals, emergency
medical facilities, and detoxification centers (e.g. U.C.S., P.A.V.E., Southwestern
Vermont Medical Center).

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This Policy is adopted by the Select Board of the Town of Bennington, Vermont, this
________ day of _____________, 2021 and is effective as of this date until amended or
repealed.

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Donald Campbell, Chairperson