

HPD officers complete crisis intervention class

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NEWS-SUN

Hobbs Police officers completed a weeklong specialized crisis intervention class on Friday to better prepare for possible field scenarios.

Troy Rodgers is the director of the Albuquerque-based Public Safety Psychology Group and works with 70 different federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to teach crisis intervention team training.

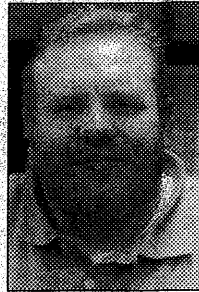
“Law enforcement officers in many ways are kind of front-line providers of mental health,” Rodgers said. “They’re the only providers of mental health who are not required to have a license or degree or certification to do so.”

Rodgers said Hobbs Police Chief Chris McCall

wanted officers to become certified in crisis intervention.

“It’s a 40-hour class which emphasizes a couple of things,” Rodgers said. “It emphasizes verbal de-escalation — being able to talk to folks more effectively and kind of strategically intervene in situations with officers out in the field.”

Rodgers said the classes also focus on developing community partnerships with mental health centers and diversion programs, in order for the mentally ill to get access



Rodgers

to services.

“We’ve got actors who we’ve trained to play different roles,” Rodgers said. “We bring those actors in and put the officers in scenarios — so they can practice skills in an environment where it’s not life or death.”

Rodgers said the training became more common after 2000, when departments realized that many officers were unprepared to deal with people with mental illnesses.

Hobbs Police Capt. Charles Cunningham said the crisis training is “another tool for their tool belt.”

“I’ve had the chance to visit several of the folks we have attending this class and it’s opened their eyes to a lot of different things,” Cunningham

said. “The training that Dr. Rodgers and his company provides — it brings a different perspective to the table and it’s certainly something that we appreciate him doing.”

Police Officer Douglas Evans said the class is “awesome” and taught him how to think outside of the box.

“Dealing with people who are in crisis — there’s a lot of different protocols that you need to take to be able to de-escalate the situation other than to push it forward,” Evans said. “It’s amazing. We’re being taught different strategies and different avenues we can take to help that person.”

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