

# Measuring Police Attitudes toward Persons with Mental Illness to Inform First Responder Training: The Development of the MHASP

Reasons for the development of the Mental Health Attitude Survey for Police (MHASP)

- to address the public perception that police have negative atti dealing with the mentally ill
- to test our anecdotal experience that officers accept their social service role in dealing with the mentally ill and are interested in training that can help them do their job more effectively
- to determine if our Crisis Intervention & Risk Management training curriculum effects change in police attitudes toward EDPs
- to utilize the MHASP to target certain beliefs to help us tailor our trainings to influence these attitudes

## Sample Items from MHASP

## MHASP

The statements below represent attitudes or opinions you may have about mental illness and about dealing with emotionally disturbed persons or EDPs (a term widely used in policing to describe calls involving persons with mental illness). For each statement, please circle the one response that best reflects your opinion. Your responses will be anonymous.									
		Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1.	Emotionally disturbed persons take up more than their fair share of police time.	1	2	3	4	5	6		
2.	As soon as a person shows signs of mental disturbance, he/ she should be hospitalized.	1	2	3	4	5	6		
3.	Wellness and recovery are possible and achievable for emotionally disturbed persons.	1	2	3	4	5	6		
4.	Emotionally disturbed persons need the same kind of control and discipline as a young child.	1	2	3	4	5	6		
5.	Residents should accept the location of mental health facilities in their neighborhood to serve the needs of the local community.	1	2	3	4	5	6		
6.	It is frightening to think of emotionally disturbed persons living in residential neighborhoods.	1	2	3	4	5	6		

## Sample of Comparison Measure

## Please read the following vignette and answer the questions that follow.

Mary is a woman who has completed high school. Up until a year ago, life was pretty okay for Mary. But then thing started to change. She thought that people around her were making disapproving comments and talking behind back. Mary was convinced that people were spying on her and that they could hear what she was thinking lost her drive to participate in her usual work and family activities and retreated to her home, eventuall most of her day in her room. Mary became so preoccupied with what she was thinking that she skipped stopped bathing regularly. At night, when everyone else was sleeping, she was walking back and forth in Mary was hearing voices even though no one else was around. These voices told her what to do and what She has been living this way for six months.

Based on the above vignette, please circle the one response that best reflects your opinion for each question or statement.

- 1. How willing would you be to move next door to a person described as having a mental health problem probably unwilling definitely unwilling definitely willing probably willing
- 2. How willing would you be to make friends with that person? definitely willing probably willing probab

terminology used to describe persons with mental illness in crisis. olice officials have expressed genuine interest in knowing the results of this survey. The MHASP has received recent interest om researchers working with police

> A scree plot of the eigenvalues indicated that four factors (subscales) could be extracted from the data.

# **Scree Plot for Factor Analysis**

# Adjusted Alpha = .780, 13 item

isturbed persons take up mor

re tax money should be spent on the care and treatment of

Ve have a responsibility to provide the best possible care for

pre tolerant attitude toward emo persons un ouir societ

emotionally disturbed persons."

"I know when to implement an a

## Adjusted Alpha = .891, 10 items

"It is frightening to think living in residential neig

"I would not want to live ne emotionally disturbed.

"Locating mental heal lowngrades the neighbo

<u>Willingness to Socialize with EDPs (adjusted alpha = .856, 7 items)</u> "How willing would you be to move next door to a person described as having a mental health problem?"

Attitude that EDPs are Antisocial (adjusted alpha = .867, 4 items) "If Mary/John got appropriate help, how violent do you th be in the long run?'

Attitude that EDPs have Potential (adjusted alpha = .846 "How creative or artistic in the long

Correlations Among MHASP Subscales & Vignette Attitude Subscales									
MHASP Scales		Willingness to Socialize with EDPs <sup>3</sup>	Attitude that EDPs are Antisocial <sup>ь</sup>	Attitude that EDPs have Potential <sup>3</sup>	Vignette Total <sup>b</sup>				
Attitude Toward EDPs <sup>b</sup>	r	253**	.171**	143**	.300**				
	p	<.000	<.001	<.007	<.0005				
	n	353	357	358	345				
Attitude Toward	r	.335**	126*	.124*	315***				
Community	p	.0005	.015	.017	<.0005				
Responsibility for EDPs <sup>a</sup>	n	371	371	373	360				
Feel Adequately	r	038	-0.16	.057	-0.13				
Prepared to Deal with	p	.461	.760	.268	.804				
EDP's <sup>a</sup>	n	374	378	380	363				
Attitude Toward	r	613**	.190**	153**	.528**				
EDPs in the	p	<.0005	<.0005	<.003	<.0005				
Community <sup>ь</sup>	n	371	376	377	362				
Total of Scaled Items <sup>b</sup>	r	511** < 0005	.203**	186**	.486**				



work.

78% indicated that they had received past training on dealing with EDPs.

50% indicated that they responded to 1 or more EDP calls per week during the past month.

Female officers have significantly less negative Attitudes Toward EDPs, have significantly less negative Attitudes Toward EDPs in the Community, and are significantly more likely to be Willing to Socialize with EDPs.

Officers with previous training have significantly less negative Attitudes Toward EDPs, feel significantly more Adequately Prepared to Deal with EDPs, and are less likely to have the Attitude that EDPs are Antisocial.

EDPs.

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Avg. Age=41 (range = 23 to 64), primarily white (73%), males (91%), approximately 68% reporting having obtained a bachelor's degree or higher education.

Avg. years employed in law enforcement = 15 (range = 0.5 to 39 years).

78% indicated that they had personal experience with someone who has a mental illness outside of

Officers with some personal experience with the mentally ill outside of work feel significantly better prepared to deal with EDPs, and they are significantly more likely to be willing to socialize with

