



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pawtucket – Gateway Healthcare, a Pawtucket-based community behavioral healthcare organization, and the Pawtucket Police Department have embarked on a collaborative effort to outreach to individuals in the Pawtucket area who have been identified as emotionally disturbed or who are at risk of injuring themselves or others, guiding them to appropriate resources. This new partnership came on the heels of a training effort conducted by Gateway Healthcare to educate law enforcement personnel on how to best work with individuals who are in a mental health crisis.

Twice a week, two representatives from the Pawtucket Police Crisis Negotiation Team, along with an appointed clinical consultant from Gateway, outreach to families and individuals who have been identified as suicidal or emotionally disturbed. Gateway's unique appointment to the Pawtucket Police Department's Crisis Negotiation Team is the first of its kind in the state and incorporates a vital mental health component to law enforcement.

This initiative was made possible through a federal grant endorsed by Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-RI) for the development of a Special Response Team within the Pawtucket Police Department.

“The partnership between Gateway Healthcare and the Pawtucket Police Department provides an opportunity to collaboratively outreach to individuals who are in crisis. Many times the people who need us most are those without insurance or means and have nowhere to go for help, often ending up in a situation where the police are called in to respond,” said Richard Leclerc, President of Gateway

Healthcare. “It’s important to help these individuals get the right assistance in a timely manner. We believe this collaboration will make that possible.”

With the goal of increasing communication and familiarity with individuals suffering from mental illness, police officers and mental health professionals are hopeful that this effort will be able to reduce stress and anxiety for people afflicted with mental illness, by assisting them in identifying resources available and knowing they have a team on their side.

“Our intent is also to get to know the family of the person with an illness, in order for them to become familiar with the police department and Gateway, to let them know we are available to provide assistance whenever needed. This program will help us get aid for people who need it before it develops into a crisis. Our approach is to be proactive versus strictly being reactive,” said Chief George Kelley III, Pawtucket Police Department.

The Pawtucket Police Department fields and responds to approximately 1,500 calls for individuals who are emotionally disturbed each year.



[Photo caption (l-r): Det. Charles Devine; Kyle Edward, Gateway Healthcare; Christine Emond, Gateway Healthcare; Lt. Thomas Gifford; Capt. Kevin Whalen; Lt. Napoleon Gonsalves; and Sgt. Alvaro Herrera. Not pictured: Det. Linda Bachand-Doucet]

ABOUT GATEWAY HEALTHCARE: Gateway Healthcare, Inc., is the largest non-profit behavioral healthcare organization in Rhode Island, providing a broad spectrum of preventative and treatment programs for children, adolescents, families, and adults suffering from severe mental illness, substance abuse problems, and emotional and behavioral disorders. Gateway Healthcare is headquartered in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Gateway serves over 15,000 unduplicated children, adults and families each year. For more information, please visit www.gatewayhealth.org.