



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0861-2019, **Version:** *

Res. No. 861

Resolution calling on the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to update its mandatory training curriculum to include specific training for security guards when interacting with people suffering from mental illness or substance abuse.

By Council Members Cabrera, Eugene and Cornegy

Whereas, In order to obtain a license in New York, security guards must undertake mandatory training that is administered by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Office of Public Safety; and

Whereas, The minimum standards for the training curriculum includes topics such as legal powers, ethics and conduct, and public relations; and

Whereas, However, there are currently no training requirements to guide appropriate interactions with people suffering from mental illness or substance abuse; and

Whereas, People with mental health or substance abuse issues are particularly vulnerable to personal crises that can lead to frequent and dangerous interactions with law enforcement, including security guards; and

Whereas, Such interactions can quickly become violent and even deadly if security or law enforcement officers are not properly trained in how to deal with people suffering from a substance problem or mental health condition; and

Whereas, For example, according to a report by the Treatment Advocacy Center, “the risk of being killed during a police incident is 16 times greater for individuals with untreated mental illness than for other civilians approached or stopped by officers”; and

Whereas, Similarly, the Washington Post’s data tracking of police involved shootings since 2017 shows that mental illness played a role in 25% of these incidents; and

Whereas, In response to public outcry over fatal police encounters, de-escalation training is slowly becoming common practice for police officers; and

Whereas, This training, which is mandated in nearly half the states in the Country, includes techniques on safe ways of interacting with people in crises; and

Whereas, The training also seeks to educate officers on the nuances of mental health and substance abuse illnesses, which helps them identify a person in crisis and respond safely; and,

Whereas, While much attention has been given to fatal police encounters, little tracking exists for similar cases involving armed security guards; and,

Whereas, For example, in an investigative report the Chicago Tribune found that, despite more than 40 recorded shootings, the journalists “could not find a single case where the state disciplined a guard for his or her role in a shooting”; and

Whereas, In Chicago, as in New York, training for security guards is limited and does not focus on nonviolent crisis intervention or de-escalation techniques; and

Whereas, Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C, after the deaths of two men in separate incidents who were in the custody of security guards, the Mayor proposed updating the mandatory training for security guards; and

Whereas, The proposal included doubling the number of pre-assignment training hours and expanding the training to include de-escalation practices and safely interacting with people with mental health or substance abuse illness; and,

Whereas, According to ThriveNYC, there are expected to be one in five adult New York City residents who will experience a mental health disorder during any given year; and

Whereas, At the State level, there are estimated to be 12% of residents over the age of 12 who experience a substance abuse disorder each year, according to the Department of Health; and,

Whereas, Meanwhile, according to CityLimits, there are twice as many security guards than there are

police officers, and approximately ten times as many security guards as firefighters in New York State; and,

Whereas, According to Law Enforcement Today, “[t]here re over one million contract security guards working in the country and they often work at government facilities such as courthouses, large government buildings and Social Security Administration offices. Often the agencies housed in these facilities provide services that result in frequent contact with the mentally ill”; and

Whereas, This creates an environment where interactions between those with a mental health or substance abuse issue are likely to come into contact with security personnel; and

Whereas, Therefore, it is extremely important for those officers to be trained on how to safely diffuse situations and mediate the situations that are at risk of escalating due to a person’s underlying illness; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services update its mandatory training curriculum to include specific training for security guards when interacting with people suffering from mental illness or substance abuse.

LS #9861
4/29/19
LMS