



TO: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager
FROM: Claude-Alix Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer
DATE: March 12, 2015
SUBJECT: Response to Policy Order #3, adopted 7/28/14

Text of Order: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to devise and implement a system that will require the City to publicize and convene a community meeting within 72 hours of any catastrophic event - including but not limited to murders, shootings, or other similar episodes - that could impact public safety or the perception of public safety; and be it further that the City Manager is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner. Full text:
(http://www2.cambridgema.gov/cityClerk/PolicyOrder.cfm?action=search&item_id=44093)

Traumatic events can impact not only victims and their families, but also the larger community.

Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the fatal shooting of a CRLS student, a group of city leaders came together in 2012 to think about what Cambridge should have in place to counter both the immediate and long-term effects of trauma on a community.

The Cambridge Community Response Network (CCRN) includes leadership from public health, police, human services, public schools, emergency communications, and the Peace Commission. The group is facilitated by the Cambridge Public Health Department and engages citywide partners as needed (e.g. Cambridge Fire Department, Riverside Trauma Care, Inc, Department of Public Works, etc.). Questions about citywide events and neighborhood activities are to be directed to the Office of the Cambridge City Manager.

The CCRN has met on an ad hoc basis in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events impacting the city, including the Marathon bombings and the shooting death of a 22-year-old Cambridge resident in 2014. CCRN members have served in a liaison role between city leadership and groups that are organizing vigils and meetings to ensure that these gatherings achieve the goal of stabilizing the community. CCRN members have also provided consultation to city departments that have organized community meetings following a tragic event.

Services for Providers

The CCRN recognizes that community resiliency requires providers who interact with the public to be trained in prevention as well as post-event recovery strategies. To this end, public health and police staff are certified trainers in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) which is offered to human service agencies in Cambridge. MHFA is an 8-hour course that teaches frontline staff how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training helps participants identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

In addition to this prevention strategy that is currently offered to providers, the CCRN was chosen in February 2015 to be one of seven pilot sites to work with Northeastern University to develop a Vicarious Trauma Toolkit that will be made available nationally to first responders and

victim advocacy workers. The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit development will take place from March through June 2015, led by the Police Department with the Public Health Department.

This arc of prevention and recovery trainings and services for providers will strengthen Cambridge's ability to support residents both before a community trauma occurs, as well as in the longer-term aftermath.

Recommendation

The Cambridge Public Health Department recommends convening several meetings of the Cambridge Community Response Network during calendar year 2015 to develop formal guidance on how the City should inform, educate, and engage the community following a traumatic event, as well as how to build resiliency in the community. This will contribute to the implementation phase of the Community Health Improvement Plan, a five-year plan for the City which includes plans to address priority areas of behavioral health and violence. This plan has been developed with input from an array of community stakeholders and is a collective effort that continues to develop a strong culture of health and well-being here in the city. A formal progress report will be available fall 2015.