



Contact:

Amanda Grayson

Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association

651-402-1822

amanda@mnchiefs.org



For Immediate Release

Minnesota Chiefs of Police examine new ways to help those threatening to kill themselves

National and local experts debate how best to respond to suicide calls

New Brighton, Minn., Dec. 11, 2019 - The Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) convened nearly 200 law enforcement leaders, mental health professionals and stakeholders from across the state in Bloomington, Minn. today to discuss and debate how to best respond to suicide calls, one of the most controversial, timely topics in the policing profession.

Like many police departments and sheriffs' offices across the country, law enforcement agencies in Minnesota are rethinking their approach to calls where individuals are threatening to kill themselves but are posing no known threat to others.

According to a recent MCPA survey of more than 300 Minnesota police chiefs, nearly 65 percent of respondents said they have either changed their response to such calls or are considering doing so because of court rulings and the potential dangers to both the officers and the people attempting to kill themselves. Fewer than 20 percent of police chiefs who responded to the survey said they refer these calls to a crisis intervention resource and more than 25 percent have officers leave the scene if contact can't be made with the individual in crisis.

MCPA Executive Director Andy Skoogman says many local police departments, particularly smaller departments in Greater Minnesota, simply don't have access to appropriate mental health resources and believe this is one reason such calls often end violently.

"We are very concerned about this trend and want to find solutions that save lives and prevent tragedies," Skoogman said. "Today's forum was an important first step to gaining a better understanding of what's happening across our state and examining this issue from legal, ethical and practical angles."

Leading the forum, held at the Schneider Theater in Bloomington, was a panel of local and national experts including: attorney Eric Daigle, member of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement and founder of Daigle Law Group, LLC, a firm that specializes in law enforcement operations, Sue Abderholden, Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) in Minnesota, Washington County Deputy Chief Brian Mueller, president of the Special Operations Training Association of the Upper Midwest and Charles Lick, a representative of the Hennepin County EMS Medical Directors.

Bloomington Police Chief Jeff Potts, current MCPA president, said the chief's association will take what it learned today and continue to work with stakeholders on solutions, which could include future legislative proposals.

"With the growing number of mental health-related calls to law enforcement and a rise in suicide rates in our state, we believe this issue must be addressed in order to help police officers protect themselves and help those who are contemplating ending their own life," Potts said.

Suicide Calls: Debating how Best to Respond to People in Crisis was the MCPA's third annual Critical Issues forum, a series of facilitated discussions with local and national experts on topics of interest in law enforcement. The previous Critical Issues forums focused on the increasing number of mental health-related calls for service and the recruitment and retention of police officers in Minnesota.

For more, visit www.mnchiefs.org.

About MCPA

The Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) is a non-profit professional member organization whose mission is to provide the highest quality of police services and leadership to the people of Minnesota. The vision is to be the recognized voice for professional law enforcement in Minnesota. The MCPA represents approximately 500 police chiefs and command staff at municipal and state law enforcement agencies across Minnesota. For more, visit www.mnchiefs.org.