

Shooting of Emotionally Disturbed Man Puts Focus on New Training

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The police investigating the death of Mr. Jeune on Monday. The officer who shot Mr. Jeune had not received the department's crisis intervention training. The three other officers who responded had. John Taggart for The New York Times

For the last two years, in classes of 30 officers at a time, the [New York Police Department](#) has been trying to teach officers to defuse encounters with people in mental health crises.

Police trainers talk about possible symptoms, drill officers on how to keep people from grabbing their weapons and in some cases even describe their own experiences in therapy. Advocates for those with mental illnesses say New York was slow to embrace the training and still lags behind other cities. But the goal is to give front-line officers tools once reserved for specialized units, so that they can better respond to the 157,000 annual calls in New York City for distressed people.

One of those calls came into 911 on Monday afternoon, and by some measures the Police Department's response reflected its new approach: Three of the four patrol officers who responded happened to have been through the training, and one of those officers fired his Taser [stun gun](#) to try to subdue the disturbed man in Brooklyn.

But the deadly outcome — [another officer subsequently shot and killed the man, Dwayne Jeune, 32](#) — highlighted the significant limits of the city's strategy, as well as the unpredictability of mental health emergencies.

The department's chief of patrol, Terence A. Monahan, offered a more detailed account Tuesday of the shooting, based on interviews Monday night with the three officers at the scene who did not fire their guns.

He said Mr. Jeune rushed out of a back bedroom in his East Flatbush apartment, which police officials said was small and crowded with belongings. After Officer Adam Gierlachowski, a two-year veteran of the police force, fired the Taser, Mr. Jeune continued advancing and pushed Officer Gierlachowski to the ground, Chief Monahan said. The department is investigating why the Taser did not stop Mr. Jeune.

Mr. Jeune then stood over the officer, a serrated kitchen knife in one hand, prompting another officer, Miguel Gonzalez, to fire five shots, killing Mr. Jeune, Chief Monahan said.

Chief Monahan said Officer Gonzalez, a four-year veteran, was the only officer at the scene who had not gone through the department's crisis intervention training.

Officer Gonzalez also shot and wounded a troubled man nine months ago in Brooklyn after the man called 911 on himself, the police commissioner, James P. O'Neill, said. After the man lunged at officers while holding a knife, Officer Gonzalez shot him three times, the police said. Commissioner O'Neill said the department's review of that shooting had not been completed, but investigators said they believed it was within guidelines.

In a 911 call shortly before Officer Gonzalez and three colleagues responded on Monday afternoon, Mr. Jeune's mother told a dispatcher her son was off his medication, acting erratically and had smashed a television, said a police official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. But the police said that the mother did not say her son had a weapon or that he was threatening anyone, and the call was logged as a nonviolent emotionally disturbed person.

That meant that the specialized Emergency Service Unit was not immediately sent to the scene, as it often is in cases of emotionally disturbed and violent people, the police said. Four officers from the 67th Precinct responded.



It was unusual that three of them had gone through the department's crisis intervention training. The Police Department said on Tuesday that 5,653 of its roughly 36,000 officers have completed it.

In a [report in January](#), the inspector general for the Police Department criticized the department for randomly assigning officers to mental health crisis calls, instead of having a system that dispatches trained officers.

Mr. Jeune's mother opened the door for the officers and ran to the back of the apartment, yelling, "He's back here, he's back here," Chief Monahan said. The police said the mother did not tell officers her son had a knife. Mr. Jeune's father was also in the apartment.

and Vibert, stood beside City Councilman Jumaane Williams as he called for an independent investigation of the shooting and a task force to examine police protocols for dealing with emotionally disturbed people.

Vibert Jeune spoke passionately as he described policing in his native Guyana, where officers carry batons, and policing in the United States, where they carry guns. He became emotional as he described the loss of his son.

"My son is gone," he said. "Oh yes, we feel it. That's my son. He could have been alive today."

"We called for help," he continued, his voice escalating. "We didn't get help. We didn't get help at all."

Advocates for those with mental illnesses have urged the Police Department to increase the pace of its crisis intervention training.

"It's a start, but not enough," said Steve Coe, the chief executive officer of Community Access, a nonprofit organization that helps people with mental illness.

Commissioner O'Neill said on Tuesday that the training was extensive and that, "Of course we would like it always to move a little bit faster."

Carla Rabinowitz, the advocacy coordinator at Community Access, said the Police Department needed to account for how fearful people with mental illnesses are of the police.

Given how quickly they had to respond, the officers probably knew little about Mr. Jeune's history or what his mother told the dispatcher. The police had also responded to a call in March 2014 at the same address saying that Mr. Jeune was off his medication.

Kinsey McManus, services director at the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, said a critical piece of the crisis intervention training was for officers to slow down and seek more information from family members before rushing into a scene. She said police officers cornering someone with a mental illness could make the person act defensively.

Ashley Southall contributed reporting.