

Help, in time

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FULL TEXT

Again, a New Yorker in emotional distress lies dead with NYPD bullets in her body.

Again, questions burn about how responding officers handled a threatening situation, concerning the 50 seconds it took for Susan Muller to pull out a knife, lunge at police and then fall to a fusillade in her Maspeth, Queens, home. If officers had good reason to believe they or anyone else faced a threat to their lives, shooting in defense was justified.

But it is a shame of the city that police are again forced to act as last responders for mental health problems that are far more properly and peacefully handled earlier by better-equipped people and institutions.

So it was with Deborah Danner, and Dwayne Jeune, and Miguel Richardson, and Saheed Vassell.

Years ago, Mayor de Blasio and Police Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill committed to expanding a four-day crisis intervention training to every last officer. They have only now finished training sergeants and lieutenants, and barely more than one in four cops; it'll take another six years to finish the job. (One of the four officers on the scene at Muller's home was so trained.)

On the other hand, in response to an Inspector General report last year flagging troubles getting specially trained cops to scenes of mental health meltdowns, the NYPD stressed that all officers already have sufficient Police Academy training.

Which is it, mayor and commissioner: Is more training urgently necessary or utterly superfluous?

Our humble opinion, as New Yorkers who don't walk the beat: train every front-line cop, for when an individual falls through every crack.

A mayoral task force now hard at work aims at the right idea: Far, far, far better to ensure that there are fewer cracks in the first place. Get psychiatrists and social workers to do their jobs as soon, and as well, as humanly possible.

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