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Vaya Health Partners with Local Law Enforcement to Offer Crisis Intervention Team Training

LENOIR, NC – Officers from seven law enforcement agencies in the region are now better equipped to respond to people experiencing a behavioral health crisis following a 40-hour training hosted by Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute. Vaya Health, a public managed care organization serving 31 counties throughout North Carolina, coordinated the training at no cost to participating agencies.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is a program designed to improve safety for officers, first responders, and people in crisis. The program can help connect individuals to appropriate services and supports for behavioral health needs, strengthen ties with the community, and reduce arrests.

First developed in 1988, CIT programs have been implemented by communities throughout North Carolina and across the country. The model helps reduce stigma associated with mental illness, substance use disorder, and intellectual/developmental disabilities and provides a forum for more effective problem solving and interaction between local criminal justice and mental health care systems.

“CIT is one of the most important classes we can provide for our officers to prepare them for the communities they police,” said Andy Le Beau, chief of Boone’s police department. “Mental

health issues are so prevalent in our society, and this class equips them to respond in a professional, appropriate manner that is empathetic to those we serve.”

Vaya’s CIT programs are tailored to meet local needs. Courses provide advanced knowledge and skills to de-escalate crisis situations and link individuals to treatment. Classes are led by behavioral health professionals, experienced officers, family members of people with a mental illness, and people in recovery.

A total of 21 participants from seven law enforcement agencies participated in the training in Lenoir. Those agencies represented include Longview Police Department, Blowing Rock Police Department, Boone Police Department, Morganton Public Safety, Catawba County Sheriff's Office, Watauga County Sheriff's Office, and Caldwell County Sheriff's Office.

Programs like the one completed in Lenoir represent a partnership between communities and their first responders, mental health and substance use professionals, public health plans, individuals with lived experience, their families, and other advocates.

To learn more about Vaya’s CIT program, visit:

<https://www.vayahealth.com/get-help/education-training/crisis-intervention-team-training/>

About Vaya Health

Vaya Health is a specialty managed care organization that oversees publicly funded behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services across a 31-county region of North Carolina. Vaya manages Medicaid, federal, state and local funding to meet member and community needs while advancing whole-person health. Together with our members, provider network and local partners, we’re moving forward to a healthier North Carolina. Access to crisis assistance is available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at vayahealth.com.

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