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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2017

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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES MILESTONE IN CITY'S
MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

*All 911 dispatch operations staff completes mental health and de-escalation training
Police department appoints new leadership in Crisis Response Unit*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced significant progress in strengthening the City's mental health emergency response and services by first responders on behalf of the residents they serve. The Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC) has completed mental health awareness and de-escalation training for all of its 911 Police Operations call takers and dispatchers, and Chicago Police Department (CPD) has appointed new leadership, Lieutenant Antoinette Ursitti, to lead the Crisis Response Unit.

"These improvements are part of the comprehensive reforms I asked the Mental Health Steering Committee to enact to enhance first-responders' ability to provide appropriate and competent understanding, service and care for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis," said Mayor Emanuel. "From training of 911 call takers and dispatchers, to police training and de-escalation tactics and service delivery, we are ensuring that every aspect of the City's first-response efforts are effective in meeting the needs of individuals who may be experiencing a mental health crisis."

A primary goal of the City's mental health emergency response reforms is ensuring the safest possible conclusion to a mental health related incident. The first step in the process is correctly identifying 911 calls that warrant a crisis-intervention trained (CIT) officer response.

"Oftentimes, 911 call takers and dispatchers are the front lines of emergency response, and we want to ensure that we are delivering the highest quality service both to residents and first responders," said OEMC Executive Director Alicia-Tate Nadeau. "As a result of this training, our 911 Operations staff now has the tools they need to help identify a mental health related call and ensure the proper resources are dispatched to help individuals with mental illness."

The training curriculum used for OEMC call takers and dispatchers, developed by OEMC in collaboration with CPD and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chicago, is an important step forward in improving the City's overall mental health response system. In an effort to better inform the training and curriculum, all 911 training staff members and 911 supervisors completed CPD's 40-hour CIT course prior to developing the new module specifically for telecommunicators. This training includes: an overview of CPD's CIT programming, group activities to review example calls needing CIT response, methods to communicate with callers experiencing a mental health

crisis to better de-escalate the situation for both the caller and first responders arriving the scene, role playing scenarios to simulate CIT calls, and a review of CPD and OEMC's policies regarding mental health related responses.

As a result of the heightened sense of awareness, the total number of CIT identified calls have grown and CIT resources are being dispatched in much higher volume. As a result of the new training and enhancements to the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, there were 25,691 CIT identified events in 2016, almost five times the 5,650 911 CIT identified events in 2015. Additionally, in 2016, 16,328 CIT identified events were responded to by CIT-trained officers, up from just 3,862 in 2015.

"As part of our commitment to ensuring that we faithfully protect and serve every Chicagoan, CPD is placing the necessary resources in our Crisis Intervention Training program," said CPD Superintendent Eddie Johnson. "Through these additions, we will be able to provide better service to the city and rebuild the public trust necessary to make Chicago safer."

Effective immediately, Lieutenant Antoinette Ursitti, a 16-year veteran of the police department, will oversee the unit and provide the necessary, qualified leadership to ensure that the Crisis Response Unit has the support and direction it needs to continue to carry out the CPD's CIT and mental health response goals. Lieutenant Ursitti brings with her an Ed.D. in Ethical Leadership from the Olivet Nazarene University, an M.S. in Human Services – Counseling from the National-Louis University, and a B.A. in Communications from Loyola University. In addition, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor and twice-certified in Crisis Intervention Training. Lieutenant Ursitti previously served as an officer and Sergeant in the Wood, Town Hall, Near West and Harrison police districts.

"The Chicago Police Department's Crisis Response Unit, in coordination with our partners in city services, criminal justice, education, and mental health advocacy, is committed to enhancing a comprehensive approach to crisis intervention," said Lieutenant Antoinette Ursitti. "Our strategy is unique in that it goes beyond supporting the optimal response of police officers to mental health-related assignments in the field to driving the delivery of wraparound services to members of the community coping with mental health issues."

As commanding officer of the Crisis Response Unit, Lieutenant Ursitti will be responsible for enhancing the department's CIT training curricula on mental health issues, implementing best practices for district-level response, intervention and de-escalation to mental health-related incidents, and developing a uniform crisis intervention strategy across the department.

"The Chicago Department of Public Health is committed to ending violence in our communities. We know violence is a public health problem and that the public health community has a role to play in solving this problem," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D. "As we stated in Healthy Chicago 2.0, we are committed to preventing violence by strengthening individual and community protective factors that include improving access to mental health services and assuring that Chicago becomes a trauma informed city."

The reform efforts are informed by the City's Mental Health Steering Committee, the Mayor's Police Accountability Task Force and Department of Justice Report. Additional efforts in support of the

City's mental health awareness and response efforts include new scenario-based training for Chicago's public safety departments and the West Side Community Outreach Project.

"CIT training is proven effective in supporting individuals experiencing crisis, and the value that CIT trained officers bring to our city is invaluable and saves lives," said Alexa James, MS, LCSW, Executive Director NAMI Chicago. "Seeing the expansion of the CIT and mental health emergency response training program is incredibly exciting with the newly appointed Lieutenant at the helm expanding, updating and incorporating the core principles that CIT training promises. Seeing collaboration among CPD, OEMC, CFD and mental health advocates highlights the understanding that there is not one responsible party in all of reform, but rather collaboration and leadership with multiple agencies working toward the same goal."

In January, the Chicago Fire Department, CPD and OEMC announced a partnership with EMS System Hospitals to develop a state-of-the-art crisis response training course and curriculum. The new SIMLAB course is intended to continue to improve collaboration in the recognition and treatment of a person experiencing a mental health emergency. The course brings together EMS providers, 911 call takers and dispatchers, and CPD officers with mental health providers to engage in a live simulation featuring scenario-based crisis intervention training. The new pilot training will begin in early spring.

As the city works to improve its response to individuals experiencing mental health symptoms, the West Side Outreach Project aims simultaneously to help residents connect with mental health services and support available. Now underway, the pilot program provides residents with free mental health and CIT awareness training to help identify the signs and symptoms of individuals experiencing mental health or addiction issues, inform them where they can find services in their community and educate them on how to contact a CIT-trained officer. The program is spearheaded by the Kennedy Forum, NAMI Chicago and Chicago Department of Public Health and brings together Catholic Charities, Presence Health and Sinai Hospital, to train at least 300 individuals from local schools, faith-based institutions and community-based organizations. A study of the pilot by UIC's Jane Addams College of Social Work is funded jointly by the Michael Reese Health Trust and the Chicago Department of Public Health.

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