

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

Mental Wellness and Mental Health Video Transcript

John Saunders, Canadian Red Cross: Sometimes when people have cognitive difficulties or challenges, some feel that speaking louder will make it clearer, and literally, I've stopped one individual from yelling at a client, because they thought that might make it easier for them to understand. They had no idea that they were doing it, it just seemed to be a reaction. And that certainly would shut down barriers, and by way of a perception thing you can imagine how that looked to onlookers.

Roberta Scott, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: You know people who maybe they are hearing voices and things like that, and you come in and you've got to try and deal with them and they're not sure what's going on. So the issues of just trying to ease their mind and make them feel relaxed and be able to communicate. Also, you learn a lot about the skills of trying to communicate with people with different psychiatric challenges and disabilities in that way. So, I find that a lot of times they don't trust you, your coming in with a uniform you know, and like I said, they may be dealing with hallucinations. They may not be really clear on what's going on in their life right now and you come in and you're trying to ask them questions and things. So you have to move very slowly, you have to approach them in a way that doesn't threaten them and make them feel unsafe. You know, reassure them that you're there to help them. That's what we always do, we always say you know, "We're to help you, we're not going to hurt you, we just want to help you, you know what can we do to help you," if they want to express themselves. So it's just being patient not coming in a way that's threatening and startling them and then finding out what their particular history is, with schizophrenics, a lot of times they have hallucinations and things like that. So once you find out what you're dealing with then it's basically just using your skills to try and keep them calm and relaxed. Things we talk about in our job is that you want to let people know what you're going to do before you do it, and that's really important with anyone and certainly people with disabilities. So you don't just barge in and start manhandling them or doing things. You explain to them why you're here, what you're going to do, get their permission, and ask them what's the best way to help them, and that sort of gains that trust and the communication.