

Good Afternoon,

I have been a Crisis worker for 19 years. As a Crisis Worker I am tasked with responding to homes that may need help controlling things normally tasked to police officers. Things such as physical and sexual assaults, physical and sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse. I have been asked to complete wellness checks at homes where there was a concern of firearms or other weapons on the property of a disgruntled client or provider, and even to assist officers who are on the scene, so they can leave to respond to other calls. The toll this responsibility takes is incredibly mentally and physically draining.

Being a Crisis Worker can be incredibly dangerous and exposes us to violent and even permanent injury. I have received multiple injuries that required medical attention. I have been attacked by individuals much larger than me brandishing weapons.

Our ERs and jails are not equipped and often resistant to serve our clients due to their diagnosis. We are often tasked with stabilizing and caring for a client who would normally be hospitalized or incarcerated, but have been denied access to proper help due to their diagnosis. Corrections, Police, and Hospitals have many other colleagues in close proximity, locked doors, extraction teams, mechanical and chemical restraint tools, security guards, nurses, and clinicians to call on. Our training only allows for verbal de-escalation and no pain physical restraint, and our back up can be hours away. As you can see there is a pattern of Crisis being asked to mitigate and handle many dangerous situations, without the help of many tools normally given to corrections, police, and hospitals. As the restraint trainer for 15 years I can tell you that this means that our physical strength, health, and mental acuity is even more important when handling a crisis situation. In my 19 years as a Crisis Worker, I have seen elder team members who are holding on to their jobs, due to the retirement requirements, well past the point where they are comfortable using physical restraint.

As crisis workers we are subject to verbal abuse that includes death threats and threats of physical and sexual assault to us and our families. We also see horrible abuse and trauma daily through the experiences we share with our clients and see them firsthand during interventions. All of this takes an incredible emotional toll. I have remained committed for 19 years to this job and the clients I serve. At 44, that is almost half of my life. The fact that one day I might have to decide to continue to work, even though I am not physically or mentally strong enough, due to my age, is one I truly fear. I take my responsibilities as a crisis worker seriously. This is not just about us being tired. This is about the liability the state takes on when a 60-year-old restrains a violent 25-year-old. Ultimately, the clients are

the ones who will suffer if Crisis Team members are forced to work to an age where our physical and mental ability to de-escalate and protect our clients, protect our community, and protect ourselves has waned. This could lead to serious injury or even the death of one our clients, a member of the community, or ourselves.

Please allow us to retire without having to be scared that we can't keep ourselves and our clients safe. Please allow us to retire before we burn out. Please do not let two decades of honorable service end in a preventable tragedy.

Thank you for your consideration