

#NotTheWayWeveAlwaysDoneIt: Greenfield's Case Manager



Jon Cohn, Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director, City of Greenfield

As City of Greenfield Fire-Rescue Chief, I am really proud of our city, elected officials, and our organization, as you will likely not see this sign on any other door of a fire department in the state. Greenfield

Fire-Rescue proudly has a case manager, Maggie Sutton, who also works closely with the Greenfield Police and the Greenfield Health Department. Our case manager receives referrals from fire/EMS, law enforcement, and health on living conditions, mental wellness, alcohol/drugs issues, and other concerns. Outreach is initiated, assistance is offered, and resources are connected.

How did we make this possible? In November 2018, a Public Safety referendum was adopted by Greenfield voters. The referendum included “two fire department members.” Upon passage we worked on the specifics including job description (of which there was not much to go on). We had over 70 applicants and interviewed 12. Interviews included evaluators from fire/EMS, law enforcement, public health, and HR. Maggie started in August 2019.

Here is a recent case example: The fire department responded and transported a patient for a possible mental health emergency. A referral for the patient was also forwarded to Maggie by the police department for a mental health follow-up.

A couple days after receiving the referral, Maggie conducted an unannounced home visit to residence. The patient was shocked that the fire and police department had a case manager on staff and that they cared enough to request the follow-up. The patient found comfort and ease talking to Maggie, who was less authoritative than an officer. Within minutes the patient informed Maggie that she had been struggling with an addiction to Percocet, which was the cause of the 911 case. That day, Maggie referred the patient to a nearby treatment center and offered to accompany the patient to her first visit. Since then, the patient has remained sober, continues her substance use treatment, and has since engaged in mental health treatment.

Bringing a case manager aboard was more than change; it was a conceptual change of traditional services. While the results do not have lights and sirens, they have been nothing short of pretty remarkable on multiple levels. Change is hard or everyone would be doing it; but it is the difference between mission and vision. Contact Jon at jon.cohn@gffd.us