

Caren Caldwell
February 24, 2021
In support of HB 2417

My name is Caren Caldwell. I live in Ashland. I have two adult sons, both have a mental illness. Both have interacted with police and been arrested. I have called the police myself when one of my sons was exhibiting psychotic behavior. Why? Because I couldn't find resources anywhere else that would respond to him in a crisis.

Imagine my how I felt when I read about the death of Matthew Graves at the hands of Eagle Point police in 2018. Graves was 35 and suffered from schizophrenia. He was killed by Eagle Point police after an officer saw him cross a street against a light and followed him into a restaurant bathroom.

According to the Ashland Tidings, "Graves was making statements that [the officer] should have recognized as consistent with mental illness." Eagle Point officers are trained yearly in crisis intervention. But, "rather than try to de-escalate the situation and get Graves to calm down, the officer shouted commands at him, demanding that he get on the ground."

Graves was shot twice in the back as he lay on the floor after failing to respond to the officer's commands. The newspaper editorialized, ". . . this case should never have reached that point. The officers were never in danger. Graves was unarmed. Officer C. had no business pursuing a mentally ill jaywalker into a public restroom and aggressively confronting him."

Matthew Horace is a black cop, a twenty-eight-year veteran of federal, state, and local law enforcement. He is the author of *The Black and the Blue: A Cop Reveals the Crimes, Racism, and Injustice in America's Law Enforcement*.

Horace writes, ". . . because America has failed to adequately provide care for the homeless and the mentally ill, every day the police find themselves on a collision course with people they are not trained to engage, often with disastrous results.

". . . Most cops don't understand what it truly means when mentally ill people say, "Don't touch me. Unfortunately, the police response, in most cases, is to touch them, because in cop world, if people don't respond to our verbal commands, we're trained to apply force. But how can these people follow commands when their minds don't allow them to even adequately process the conversations and exchanges? In too many of these encounters, the result is death. . . .

". . . On average, each day, one mentally ill or disabled person is killed by a law enforcement officer because these officers are being asked to do a job that they simply cannot and should not be assigned to do."

I want a Cahoots-type mobile crisis response program for our community that it will be a non-police response. Ebony Morgan is a crisis worker with CAHOOTS in Eugene/Springfield. She told NPR in 2020 how it works:

"The tools that I carry are my training. I carry my de-escalation training, my crisis training, a knowledge of our local resources and how to appropriately apply them. I don't have any weapons, and I've never found that I needed them. . . . Last year, out of a total of about 24,000 calls, 150 times we called for police backup for some reason, so not very often. In 30 years, we've never had a serious injury or a death that our team was responsible for."

Cahoots staff are successful because they receive, not 40 hours of CIT training in a classroom like the police, but 500-600 hours of in-house and on-the-street training. They are not police. They carry no weapons.

That's what I want for my loved ones.