Police are tasked with responding to crises in mental health.

The results can be disastrous for officers and callers alike.

By TESSY ROSENBLUTH Concord Monitor

Last summer, Kevin O’Reilly sat around the Meredith police station with other officers and talked about a trend they noticed in the local news. Stories of police shootings, specifically those that involved someone in a mental health crisis, seemed to pop up every couple of weeks.

“Consistently hearing these cases, it’s a real issue,” O’Reilly said. “It’s something we’re working to create solutions for.”

The Meredith police department is one of many in the state that are thinking about the trend they noticed on the local news. They are wondering how they can prevent these cases from happening.

“We’re not there yet,” said O’Reilly, who is the chief of police in Meredith. “Anytime something happens, we ask ourselves, ‘How did we get here?’ and ‘How can we prevent this from happening again?’”

The Meredith police department is not alone in its efforts to prevent these cases from happening.

In October, the New Hampshire State Police announced a new program called “One Call.” The program allows anyone to call a toll-free number to request assistance for someone in a mental health crisis.

Kevin O’Reilly said the program is a positive step forward, but he also said it’s not a solution on its own.

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