

To: Virginia Monteiro
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Testimony to the Mental Health Services Working Group
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Violence Prevention and Childrens' Safety

From: Patricia K. Sparkman
52 Sound Breeze Ave.
Groton, CT 06340
Tel. 860-572-1431
Email: jcsparkman@aol.com

MASS MURDERS ARE PREVENTABLE

Recent incidents involved young men suspected of being mentally ill, not criminals. I dare say, seeing their pictures in TV, wide-eyed, flat and with an eerie smile made one feel uncomfortable. Each of these men knew someone who sensed there was a problem. Yet, no one intervened. In fact the current system makes it nearly impossible for a concerned citizen to trigger an involuntary evaluation, even a parent or relative. For them to convince the troubled person to "go for help" when he is in crisis is impossible. A person in this state always refuses or denies abhorrent behavior.

Recently, I "googled " what a friend or family member could do if they feared there was imminent danger and high risk of homicidal or suicidal behavior. In Connecticut, only police or a psychologist can request an involuntary psychiatric evaluation. For family, friends or a good Samaritan they would have to contact a probate judge, who would determine if they would have the person appear before him, and then the judge could order the evaluation.

In a crisis, this is ridiculous!

For a psychiatrist to properly evaluate a person for homicidal or suicidal ideation, he must know pertinent facts about the person's behavior during the last three days. Police or a psychologist only have brief knowledge, and cannot provide complete information.

This is what I suggest.

1. Police should provide transportation to a medical facility when requested by the family. It is too dangerous to drive such a person, alone.
2. Anyone – family, friend, professional, the homeless – should be permitted to give information to the doctor. This should be confidential, and not in the presence of the person they are reporting about. Also, there should be mandated reporting by social workers , teachers, etc. as is now required for reporting child abuse.