

# *NYPD has yet to train cops to deal with emotionally disturbed people one year after death of Deborah Danner, critics say*

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Mental health advocates call for changes in the way emergency responders deal with calls to 911 involving “emotional disturbed persons” during a rally outside City Hall Wednesday. (Luiz C. Ribeiro/For New York Daily News )

A year after an elderly, [mentally-ill woman was shot dead by a cop](#) in her Bronx apartment, the NYPD is still struggling to implement effective crisis intervention training to prevent such a tragedy from happening again, critics said Wednesday.

Mental health advocates commemorated the Oct. 18, 2016 death of Deborah Danner with a City Hall rally to push for changes in how the police deal with emotionally disturbed people.

But in the absence of substantial change, Danner’s family, as well as advocates for police reform and the mentally ill, remain frustrated.

“I’ve been associated with the Police Department for over 50 years,” said Danner’s cousin Wallace Cooke, 74, a retired NYPD officer. “I’ve never seen a mentally-ill white woman being killed by a cop. Not once. What happened that night is inexcusable.”

[Cop charged with killing mentally ill woman wants trial moved](#)

Danner, 66, who was black, was fatally shot by a white NYPD sergeant during a confrontation inside her Castle Hill home during which she threatened officers with a baseball bat.

NYPD brass said [Sgt. Hugh Barry](#), who fired the fatal shot, mishandled the situation, in part because he used his service weapon instead of a stun gun.



Deborah Danner was shot and killed by NYPD Sgt. Hugh Barry on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2016 in the Bronx. (Facebook)

Barry was part of a team of officers responding to a 911 call from a neighbor, who said Danner was behaving erratically.

Barry talked Danner into dropping a pair of scissors she was holding, but then Danner, a diagnosed schizophrenic, swung a wooden bat at Barry. Instead of backing out of the rear bedroom, using his Taser or calling for the Emergency Service Unit as NYPD protocol dictates, he shot Danner to death.

### [Cop who killed mentally ill Bronx woman backed by union heads](#)

In a 2012 essay, Danner eerily referenced the death of Eleanor Bumpurs, who was killed by cops under similar circumstances in 1984, and presciently noted the police were ill-equipped to deal with the mentally ill.

Mayor de Blasio and Police Commissioner James O’Neill were both critical of the Danner shooting. Barry, an eight-year veteran, was charged in May with second-degree murder, and is awaiting trial.

Barry’s lawyers were in court Monday, but their motions to dismiss the case and reduce the charges were denied by a Bronx judge. A decision on their [petition for a change of venue](#) is still pending, according to a spokeswoman for the Bronx DA’s office.

As of Tuesday, the NYPD has responded to 142,343 calls from emotionally disturbed people this year, up from 128,143 during the same period a year earlier, an increase of nearly 10%, according to police.

### [NYPD boss O’Neill meets with fiercely critical cop union heads](#)

Nearly 7,000 cops have received crisis intervention training. And, as of Sept. 12, there were 13,640 Tasers in use.

The crisis intervention offered by the city Health Department and the NYPD features a four-day training class that teaches listening skills, and shows officers “how to demonstrate empathy and build rapport with subjects, slowing down situations and de-escalating the subject’s negative emotions,” according to the Police Department’s web page.

All 23,000 patrol officers will be trained by 2018, according to the mayor’s office.

But critics said that’s not enough.

### [NYPD sergeants union ripped for video about ‘blue racism’](#)

“We need mobile crisis teams, we need co-response teams,” said Carla Rabinowitz, advocacy coordinator at Community Access, which helps the mentally ill.

“That’s police and mental health professionals or peers with real experience riding with the police or meeting the police there,” said Rabinowitz, who is a member of the Communities for Crisis Intervention Teams, a 75-group coalition.

“With the help of the task force, these non-police alternatives can be implemented and we can stop all the killings.”

In an interview with the Daily News last month, O’Neill reiterated that cops “failed” in the Danner case.

### [Activists set to protest police violence toward mentally ill](#)

“I continue to stand by that statement,” O’Neill told The News. “I know I received some criticism for it, but I think most people can see the breath of my statement. We were called there to help this woman and that’s not how it turned out. She ended up dying.”



Wallace Cooke Jr, 74, retired police officer and cousin to Deborah Danner (Provided)