LIKE OUR MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES—and many who are reading these words—MMRMA was Made in Michigan.

At our upcoming 2017 Annual Meeting August 17–19 at the Grand Traverse Resort, we’ll honor that collective heritage. We’ll gather to network with our fellow Michiganders and pay tribute to many of the foods, people, natural resources, and customs hailing from the Great Lakes State. Together we’ll discover activities and insights that will help make our state, our municipalities, and our organization better than ever.

Local is Global
Actor, author, and activist Ed Begley Jr. is the featured speaker at this year’s Opening Session on Thursday evening. Drawing on his decades of dedication to eco-living, he will enlighten attendees on how to help Save Michigan and the World, environmentally speaking.

Our planet has value. What’s more, demonstrating that we value the planet doesn’t have to cost inordinate amounts of time or money. Begley encourages starting with small but definitive actions, which can add up to a significant impact.

Simply Better
Begley returns Friday morning to kick off that day’s training lineup. He’ll share more ideas on how we can Live Simply So That Others Can Simply Live. He conveys his message through information and humor, from the early seeds of his own eco-journey to the choices he makes today.

Participants will come away from Begley’s sessions with a clearer understanding of our environmental challenges—as well as an array of actions they can take right away to contribute to real, sustainable solutions.

Workplace Morale
Joyce Weiss is a Michigan-based consultant who specializes in professional development, leadership, and communication. She will continue the Friday training program with a presentation on Resolving Conflict in the Workplace.

Deadlines, competing priorities, and a myriad of personalities can be a perfect storm for conflict. Luckily, Weiss has spent over 30 years helping companies deal with such situations.

Attendees will learn techniques and skills for assessing, addressing, and resolving conflicts. Teams can do more than simply restore morale; they can watch it soar.

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Call for Entries: Made in Michigan Photo Contest

Help us showcase the beauty and history of MMRMA communities by entering our photo contest. Winners will be selected in two categories:

> Best Community Photo from a current location.
> Best Historical Photo representing when your community was founded.

Winners will receive a $500 donation to the charity of their choice, and the winning photo could be selected for the cover of this year’s Annual Report.

To enter, email a high-resolution JPEG and description to denise@associationguidance.com.

For contest details, download a copy of the Annual Meeting brochure at mmrma.org. The entry deadline is August 1.

Make your reservations at mmrma.org by July 31 to guarantee your seats.
The Many Challenges of Policing Special Needs Populations

by Tom Cremonte,
Risk Control Consultant

AS WE ALL KNOW, LAW enforcement departments and officers are experiencing increased media scrutiny surrounding their interactions in the line of duty.

Allegations of excessive force have led to lawsuits, federal government interventions, and other repercussions. The flurry of publicity has also included evidence that the suspects in several incidents suffered from mental illness or had other special needs.

A long-misunderstood segment of the population, people with special needs encompass a spectrum of conditions, including mental illnesses, substance abuse, autism, and other developmental issues.

While many have been fortunate to receive an accurate diagnosis, appropriate medical treatment, and medications, it is nevertheless difficult to estimate how many individuals in MMRMA member communities are undiagnosed, lack access to care, or are simply off their medication for any number of reasons.

Fortunately, today we have access to better knowledge, training, and tools to assist officers when interacting with the special needs community in the line of duty.

Proper training can shift officers’ mindsets and actions—and, in turn, outcomes.

Historical Challenges

In the 1970s and 1980s, officers had little or no training to help them understand the nature and nuances of mental health and associated disorders. When calls came in about someone behaving erratically—wandering, homeless, disorderly, perhaps even involved in a minor incident—officers often transported the person to a nearby community and let them out in the street.

On other occasions, they were lodged on a petty charge. Unfortunately, special needs individuals are often victimized, receive inadequate treatment, or are held in isolation while in jail.

These “solutions” not only passed the buck, they also didn’t solve the underlying issue, and sometimes worsened the person’s condition.

Inadequate Options

If someone was not necessarily criminal but needed safekeeping for their own protection and others’, officers sometimes turned them over to trained mental health personnel at government-run care facilities. By the 1990s, however, systematic closings presented new challenges, many of which remain today.

Law enforcement and corrections personnel regularly have multiple, sometimes recurrent interactions with the same individuals. This not only uses time and energy better spent elsewhere, but many of these encounters also result in arrest for resisting and obstructing.

The first contact is crucial in identifying each person’s need for services or diversion.

Training Matters

Because the special needs population is varied and complex, there is no “one-size-fits-all” answer. And, of course, some interactions may still require more conventional remedies, including arrest. Violent criminal offenders and other high-risk individuals need to be dealt with appropriately.

Still, we can train personnel to understand the types of illnesses and disorders they might encounter, along with de-escalation techniques and remedies. We can shift officers’ mindsets and actions—and, in turn, outcomes—with proper training.

“Special needs” encompasses a wide spectrum of conditions: mental illnesses, substance abuse, autism, and other developmental issues.

As for jail personnel, they do their best to diagnose and treat any underlying conditions with medication. Many individuals are in jails just long enough to be stabilized, but they are often not monitored after their release from custody, and eventually their condition and behaviors will flare up yet again.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to serving those with special needs.

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Program Overview

Working in conjunction with the Administrative Risk Control Advisory Committee, the MMRMA team developed:

> A brochure for managers and trainers that outlines the exposure and recommended guidelines and controls.

> A sample checklist to serve as a starting point for public entities as they create checklists customized for their specific operations and facilities.

> Training seminars to provide face-to-face, interactive instruction.

An article showcasing the Pre-Active Assailant Risk Assessment program in more detail appears in MMRMA’s December 2016 Risk Journal. It provides a brief primer on how to address potential active assailant incidents. The brochure and training offer a multi-pronged approach to this timely and high-profile topic.

Some key considerations include taking a fresh look at building and operational security to make targets unappealing, promoting situational awareness among managers and employees, and establishing a notification process to alert all necessary parties when and if an incident occurs or appears to be imminent.

Training employees in all these areas is also essential.

The Pre-Active Assailant Risk Assessment program complements two other related MMRMA documents, Municipal Employee Guide for Confrontation with Active Shooter and Rapid Response: Model Policy and Procedure. All three of these publications are available in the Members Only section of mmrma.org. Contact Risk Control for information about training and other assistance.

Award Criteria

PRIMA evaluates candidate projects based on their significance, transferability, cost/benefit, and originality/innovation. MMRMA’s Pre-Active Assailant Risk Assessment project ranked high in all of these criteria.

About PRIMA

PRIMA is the national service organization for public entity risk managers. Its mission is to advance the knowledge and practice of public risk management.

PRIMA provides a host of information, education, and services for risk management professionals. Its signature event is its Annual Meeting, which attracts over 2,000 participants from across the county and internationally.

PRIMA also operates through a network of state chapters. MMRMA staff has long taken an active role in providing educational resources and serving as officers for Michigan PRIMA.

Congratulations to the MMRMA Risk Control team. This recognition by PRIMA is well-deserved by all who contributed to the Pre-Active Assailant Risk Assessment program. We are proud of the many quality programs and services we provide to the MMRMA membership.
Annual Meeting Preview, continued from page 1

Put Meetings to Work

Randall Dean, MBA, is an organizational expert who knows how to manage people, technology, and other resources. Dean returns for an encore appearance to close out the Friday training roster. He will share his recipe for Moving from Boring and Unproductive to Active and Engaged Meetings. Effective meetings not only foster respect and yield more productive results; they can also have valuable ripple effects on the organization’s overall success.

Greystone Update

For the first time, our signature August event will include a meeting of Greystone Insurance Company’s Board of Directors. Greystone, MMRMA’s wholly owned captive, launched in December 2016. The Greystone Board and MMRMA staff will provide an update on the captive’s recent activities and coming initiatives.

Business Highlights

All members are invited to attend the Annual Business Meeting on Saturday morning. The Board of Directors of MMRMA will host reports from key staff and service providers. Special guest Dr. Richard B. Gasaway brings his decades of fire and EMS experience to the podium, where he will share his insights on how to Improve Decision-Making Under Stress.

We look forward to seeing familiar friends and new faces alike at this year’s Annual Meeting. Together we will learn, connect, and celebrate the many benefits of being Made in Michigan.

Register today at mmrma.org

Policing Special Needs Populations, continued from page 2

Many Michigan agencies are encouraging alternatives to arrest and educating staff to be more effective when dealing with calls that require intervention.

Potential Tools

The most crucial moment is first contact, when personnel begin to identify a person’s need for services or diversion. It is one of five intercepts identified in the widely used “Sequential Intercept Model.”

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), developed by the Memphis, Tennessee police in the 1980s, teaches skills to help with first contact. Used in many agencies nationally, this 40-hour course may not be practical for all due to cost and time commitments.

"Managing the Mental Health Crisis" is another option. Developed by Dr. Debra A. Pinals of the University of Michigan Medical School, in conjunction with Washtenaw County, the course provides basic knowledge on the spectrum of disorders and takes participants through training scenarios. The course is co-presented by law enforcement and mental health professionals, which helps bridge disciplines and promotes the benefits of working in tandem.

Another valuable resource for police and sheriff administrators is the national "Stepping Up" initiative, a coalition aimed at reducing the number of mentally ill persons incarcerated in U.S. jails.

Resources like these can augment officers’ skill sets, enhance departments, reduce the risk of injury to officers and the public, and mitigate potential exposure to litigation.

Contact MMRMA’s Risk Control team for more on tools and training resources for dealing with special needs populations.