

My name is Gordon Dean. I am the parent of a young lady who has a serious mental illness- she is diagnosed with schizophrenia.

We have had numerous contacts with police officers over the last 5 years. Some of the officers have been truly exceptional- they performed better than many clinicians. One night recently 12 officers brought people to the CSB Woodburn Emergency Services, that is a drop in the bucket. Their jobs will be much easier when there is an actual secure drop off assessment center.

There are 2 other issues I would like to mention

Communication: and the need for open data. The Police department is doing itself a real disservice by guarding information so closely -open data while protecting dangerous information would be a great step forward. It should be noted that in Virginia FOIA does not prohibit the release of information- it eliminates the requirement for police departments to do so. What and how much is released is a matter of departmental policy.

Public info requests are frequently turned into FOIAs and are either not responded to or fees are charged per question. I have been quoted fees ranging from \$16 to \$40,000. I passed on the second and followed through on the \$16 request. This produced the information that in 2013 the FCPD went out on almost 6000 calls related to mental illness. Many other events were handled by Fire Department EMTs and the CSB Mobile Crisis unit.

One example of the problem is -A local family can't get the information on an incident that occurred at their house while they were in it. Another excellent example of the problem is found on the Virginia FOIA Council website under AO-04-14 [FOIA Council study's promise has not yet been realized](#) -see page 7, section reference AO 4-14 of(right hand column).

In a lengthy opinion to a WTKR reporter in May, the council took an in-depth look at access to suicide reports. The council acknowledged that in 2003 it reasoned that suicide were noncriminal records that could be released in the custodian's discretion. The council rescinded that opinion and instead found that because suicide is a common law felony, suicide reports could be withheld as criminal investigative files. AO-04-14 http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/ops/14/AO_04_14.htm

It is my understanding that there is only one FCPD officer handling all FOIA requests and Information subpoenas. I would assume that he is dealing with hundreds of them. There must be a better way.

The other issue I would like to mention tonight is the impressive number of felony assaulting an officer charges that mentally ill persons pick up.

It should be understood that Assaulting an officer does not necessarily mean that the person used a brick or a bat. It can be almost anything- in DC it's talking back to an officer- in Fairfax it might be bumping into or touching an officer when standing up. I do not know for sure but there seems to be a direct connection to the practice in Virginia of funding Commonwealth's Attorney's offices according to the number of felony charges and sentencing events in that jurisdiction. The [Virginia Compensation Board](#) website has further information on this topic in the [Policies and Procedures](#) section under [Commonwealth's Attorneys](#) -pages 3 and 12-14.

It is my impression that even if an officer wants to drop a charge it is up to the prosecutor whether that happens or not. More often than not a dismissal requires a guilty plea first. Convictions and Guilty pleas have a severe impact on the housing and employment options available to these already handicapped individuals. If they can't get housing or jobs it just keeps the cycle going.

Finally I would like to wholeheartedly agree with the statements of Concerned Fairfax and Heather Davies