ERNEST & JOE
CRISIS COPS
Screening Guide

PREMIERES
November 19th at 9p/8c on HBO
Also available on HBO NOW™ | HBO GO® | HBO ON-DEMAND®
For more information, go to HBO.com

Invite your friends, family and colleagues to watch the film together, and then have a post-screening discussion.

WHAT’S THE FILM ABOUT?

In San Antonio, Texas, a small team of police officers are responding to individuals going through a mental health crisis in a whole new way and putting compassionate policing practices into action. ERNIE AND JOE: CRISIS COPS follows Texas police officers Ernie Stevens and Joe Smarro, who are part of the San Antonio Police Department’s Mental Health Unit. Chronicling their daily and sometimes harrowing encounters with people in crisis, the documentary shows how their innovative approach to policing, which takes mental health into account, can help diffuse dangerous situations and lead people to critical mental health services instead of jail – one 911 call at a time. The film offers a verité portrait of the two partners and friends who share a unique bond and offers viewers an intimate glimpse into their personal lives.

HOW DO YOU HOST A SCREENING?

 Invite your group to a gathering spot - anywhere from your living room to a more formal space - to watch the film together.

1. Bring your group together. Send out invitations and collect RSVPs. A note: please be mindful of your audience as you reach out with invitations. This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17.

Here’s a sample of what your invitation can say:

<HOST NAME> cordially invites you and a guest to a screening and discussion of

ERNIE & JOE: CRISIS COPS
In San Antonio, Texas, a small team of police officers are responding to individuals going through a mental health crisis in a whole new way and putting compassionate policing practices into action. ERNIE AND JOE: CRISIS COPS follows Texas police officers
Ernie Stevens and Joe Smarro, who are part of the San Antonio Police Department’s Mental Health Unit. Chronicling their daily and sometimes harrowing encounters with people in crisis, the documentary shows how their innovative approach to policing, which takes mental health into account, can help diffuse dangerous situations and lead people to critical mental health services instead of jail – one 911 call at a time. The film offers a verité portrait of the two partners and friends who share a unique bond and offers viewers an intimate glimpse into their personal lives.

<TIME> WELCOME
<TIME> SCREENING (length 98m)

Please RSVP to <EMAIL address> by <DATE>.

Create a Facebook event as well. Then, promote your screening to potential guests. Tag your tweets with #ErnieandJoe and @HBODocs. Share the poster (see the end of the guide). Send the link to the trailer too, available at https://www.hbo.com/documentaries/ernie-and-joe

2. Introduce the film. Ask your group “why would law enforcement officers train to recognize individuals going through a mental crisis?” Give everyone a chance to write or at least consider his/her responses before the film.


4. Talk about what you saw. What have they learned? Have their perceptions changed? See below for more sample discussion questions.

5. Think about what your group can do to learn and get help. Invite guests to review the resources below. Also, urge people to tell their personal networks about the film, and the issues it raises.

6. Thank your guests. Send a thank you email the next day, and include follow up with others after the film to underscore the resources that are available for someone who might be in crisis or struggling (such as the Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK). Consider including links to the groups listed in the resources below.

How do I get the discussion going?

After the credits roll, turn up the lights and give your group time for silent reflection. Some viewers may want to leave. Some may want to share their story. Some may want to just listen. Once you’re ready to begin, encourage everyone to listen respectfully to each other as the conversation gets under way.

Here is some information and discussion prompts to start you off.

Ernie and Joe use techniques like active listening, building rapport and using non-threatening body language as they respond to individuals in crisis. Can you identify examples from the film? What was the impact?

The San Antonio Police Department’s Mental Health Unit, working in partnership with the local mental health community and the San Antonio affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), conducts crisis intervention training for officers, police academy cadets, and educators. Despite the SAPD making
crucial steps forward in decriminalizing mental illness, the MHU is only able to handle about 5% of mental health calls. What are some ways that the city of San Antonio could address the calls currently not being handled? How are mental health calls handled where you live? Identify the resources in your area and circulate print outs to the group.

How do Ernie and Joe’s previous experiences inform the way they handle situations involving individuals with mental illness going through crisis? What have they learned from each other in the time since they’ve been partners?

**Where can I learn more and get help?**

Help is available 24/7 nationwide. If you are in crisis or know someone who is, reach out immediately to the following for help:

1-800-273-8255 | National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
[https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/)

Text HOME to 741741
[https://www.crisistextline.org/](https://www.crisistextline.org/)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Find Support
[https://afsp.org/find-support/](https://afsp.org/find-support/)

DBSA - Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
[https://www.dbsalliance.org/](https://www.dbsalliance.org/)

Mental Health First Aid
[https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/)

National Alliance on Mental Illness

- Find Support and your local affiliate
  [https://www.nami.org/Find-Support](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support)

- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs

- Mental Health Resources for Law Enforcement Officers
  [https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Law-Enforcement-Officers](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Law-Enforcement-Officers)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Find Help & Treatment
[www.samhsa.gov/find-help](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help)

Vera Institute of Justice | Serving Safely
[https://www.vera.org/projects/serving-safely](https://www.vera.org/projects/serving-safely)