

ALERT TOP STORY

Social worker killed client during knife fight, Pulaski County authorities say

Pulaski County authorities released more information Thursday about an altercation earlier this week that left one man dead and another injured — saying it occurred as a community services worker conducted a home visit and was attacked by his client, who was in the midst of a mental health crisis.

Both men were stabbed multiple times with knives and the client died, Commonwealth's Attorney Justin Griffith said.

Neither man was named. Griffith said Thursday that after speaking to the family of the man who was killed and to New River Valley Community Services, he was keeping the identities private.

The prosecutor said that no criminal charges would be placed, calling the client's death a justifiable homicide that occurred in self-defense.

The man who died "was very clearly in the midst of a mental health breakdown" when he attacked the community services worker with a knife, Griffith said.

"He has suffered from numerous mental health diagnoses for the overwhelming majority of his adult life," Griffith said. "His family are outstanding members of this community who in my opinion have set an example for seeking all avenues of help for

your child when suffering from mental illness. ... Just because a bad thing happens doesn't mean that a bad person did it.”

Griffith praised the community services worker as passionate and dedicated to helping people in need, and called the violent encounter an “unfathomable tragedy.”

New River Valley Community Services provides “a much-needed range of services,” Griffith said.

A news release from Griffith and Sheriff Mike Worrell said that just before 11 a.m. Monday, the community services employee was at a residence in the 6000 block of Baptist Hollow Road and the man he was visiting attacked him.

The news release said that the county communications center received two 911 calls from the community services worker, saying that he had been stabbed by the client. The first call disconnected because service was lost. Deputies arrived during the second call.

The community services worker was back in his vehicle and going in and out of consciousness due to blood loss, the news release said. Officers took him to safety and “secured a perimeter around the residence,” the news release said.

Officers tried several times to get anyone in the residence to come out. They then entered and found the client dead from wounds inflicted by the community services worker.

Griffith said that the client attacked the community services worker with a serrated kitchen knife and that the worker had his own knife and fought back with it.

The community services worker was taken to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. Asked Wednesday about his condition, Griffith said that the worker will survive.

The news release said that though officials felt the incident posed no further danger to the community, extra patrols still were conducted and the school resource officer at Snowville Elementary School was notified.

In the news release, the sheriff thanked Virginia State Police, Radford police, and Pulaski County Public Safety for help.

By Mike Gangloff

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