

OVERVIEW OF CIT

CIT is a collaborative effort between law enforcement and the mental health community to help law enforcement officers handle incidents involving mentally ill people. CIT is a community-based collaboration between law enforcement, NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill), mental health consumers, mental health providers and local universities. Volunteer patrol officers receive 40 hours of training in mental illness and the local mental health system. The training is provided free of charge by the mental health community, providers, consumers and family members. The training focuses on providing practical techniques for de-escalating crises. The Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on Mentally Ill in the Courts (ACMIC) has worked to encourage Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training state-wide.

Crisis Intervention Team is a community-based collaboration of law enforcement, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), mental health consumers, mental health providers, and the local universities.

Crisis Intervention Team programs across the country help direct persons with mental illness into treatment instead of inappropriate incarceration. The forty-hour training provides practical techniques for de-escalating crises. Officers learn to integrate their police training with some different approaches to a person they believe to have a mental disorder. Role playing is utilized to make the experience as close to reality as possible. In 2000, the Akron Police Department became the first in Ohio to start a CIT program. The Coordinating Center of Excellence helps to bring CIT to communities across the state.

HISTORY

Crisis Intervention Teams are modeled after the Memphis Crisis Intervention Team which began in 1988. Since its inception, the Memphis Police Department has increased the number of Crisis Intervention Team officers from thirty-two officers to more than one hundred eighty. The model has received numerous awards from nationally recognized mental health organizations, law enforcement agencies, and humanitarian groups. The model has been replicated in several cities, including Portland, Oregon; Waterloo, Iowa; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Seattle, Washington; and San Jose, California. The first city in Ohio to adopt this innovative and effective program was Akron, Ohio.

Several years ago, the Akron Police Department and the Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Summit County (ADM Board) came together to create its own community-based Crisis Intervention Team. Today, the Akron Police Department, the ADM Board, and the Coordinating Center of Excellence for Jail Diversion Programs for the Mentally Ill form that collaboration. The first trained CIT officers from the Akron Police Department successfully graduated in May, 2000 and are providing an invaluable service to not only the police department, but to the mentally ill, their families, and the community.

PURPOSE

The Crisis Intervention Team is a community-based collaboration of the local police department, mental health consumers, and mental health providers. The purpose of the collaboration is to develop, establish and implement safe and proactive techniques to defuse emotionally charged situations which could lead to violence.

It should be the goal of each police department to train 25 percent of its street officers to respond to crisis situations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These officers should not be limited to geographical boundaries for specific mental disturbance calls. The officers continue to respond to other calls within the general context of police services.

Potential CIT officers participate in a 40-hour training module which is conducted by mental health providers, family advocates, mental health consumers, and CIT-trained police officers. The focus of the training is to educate the candidate in basic mental health definitions, medications, symptoms, and defusing techniques. At the conclusion of the training, the officers should understand that mental illness is a disease and not a crime.

The success of CIT training and its effect on the community depends on whether the local mental health system provides an emergency facility to respond to the needs of the police. Officers should be able to take a mentally ill person to a safe place that is not a jail or standard lock-up facility. There must also be a continuing working relationship between the police and the mental health community.

CIT training is not a “quick fix” to solving a community’s mental health problems.

WHAT IS CIT TRAINING?

Crisis Intervention Team training is a highly specialized training to provide uniformed police officers the skills they need to respond effectively to mental disturbance calls. As is well known, these calls present complex issues related to persons experiencing behavioral problems due to mental illness.

The training is comprised of several components giving police officers an overview of basic mental health education, and includes a practicum. The components presented are:

- I. Introductory Material
 - A. What is mental illness?
 - B. The family perspective.

- II. Psychiatric Illness
 - A. Schizophrenia & bipolar disorder
 - B. Psychiatric medications
 - C. Dementia/medical disorders

- III. Personality Disorders
 - A. Borderline personality disorder
 - B. Post-traumatic stress disorders

- IV. Alcohol & drug assessments
- V. Mental Retardation
- VI. Suicide Prevention
- VII. Crises with kids/adolescents
- VIII. The Courts
 - A. Civil commitment
 - B. Municipal Court perspective
- IX. Client Rights
- X. Site visits
- XI. Practicum