



## **Columbiana County CIT Peer Review**

**June 2020**

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### **Organization of CIT Peer Review Report**

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## A. The Peer Review Process

In volunteering for this peer review, Columbiana County CIT is joining 23 other county and multi-county Ohio CIT programs that have undergone this same process which is supported by the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI Ohio). The CJ CCoE was established in May 2001 to promote jail diversion alternatives for people with mental illness throughout Ohio. The Center is funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to the County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board. The ADM Board contracts with the Northeast Ohio Medical University to operate the Center.

The CJ CCoE desires to work with Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs across Ohio to strengthen our collective understanding of the core elements and emerging best practices. One vehicle of doing just that is through a peer review process: a voluntary, collegial process of identifying and coalescing the best elements of CIT programs from across the State of Ohio and the United States.

The peer review process was built from the Expert Consensus Document: Core Elements for Effective Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs which identifies 15 ideal elements that CIT programs should strive to achieve. The process consists of four parts:

- Self-Assessment
- Desk Audit
- Site Visit
- Written Report

A telephone conference call was held on May 22, 2020 among reviewers and these representatives of the Columbiana County CIT Steering Committee:

- Richard Whitfield, CIT Coordinator, Columbiana Police Department
- Marcy Patton, CCMHRSB
- Jennifer Thorn, CCMHRSB
- Lori Colian, CCMH RSB

During this call, the reviewers discussed the content of the training and CIT program development within law enforcement agencies. These topics are addressed in more detail in this report.

The site visit was conducted on June 19, 2020 by the reviewers and these members representing the Columbiana County CIT program:

- Richard Whitfield, CIT Coordinator, Columbiana Police Department
- Marcy Patton, CCMHRSB
- Jennifer Thorn, CCMHRSB
- Lori Colian, CCMH RSB

- Deloris Bailey, CFO, CCMHR SB

This final report is a synthesis of what the reviewers found after studying the program self-assessment, conducting the conference call, consulting with the designated Columbiana County CIT steering committee members and attending the site visit.

## B. Columbiana County CIT Background

Columbiana County is located on the eastern edge of Northeast Ohio and is bordered on the east by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; its neighboring Ohio counties are Jefferson, Carroll, Stark and Mahoning. The county has a total area of 534 square miles and is composed of 18 townships. Columbiana County is one of Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties. Over half of the county's total population of 103,077 lives in unincorporated rural areas with villages and towns some distance apart. The county has two major geographic concentrations of development and population. The northern corridor between the city of Salem and village of East Palestine (including the villages of Washingtonville, Leetonia, Columbiana and New Waterford and the four townships of Perry, Salem, Fairfield and Unity) extends along a 20-mile distance bordering Mahoning County and contains almost 48% of the county's population. The southern corridor extends for about 10 miles from the village of Wellsville to the city of East Liverpool (including St. Clair Township) and contains 11% of the county's total population.

Columbiana County maintains 15 active city/township police departments as well as the Columbiana County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. In addition, although Minerva Police Department is located in Stark County, part of their jurisdiction is in Columbiana County, so they are included in their Crisis Intervention Team. Three townships do not have police departments (Hanoverton, Rogers, Fairfield Township).

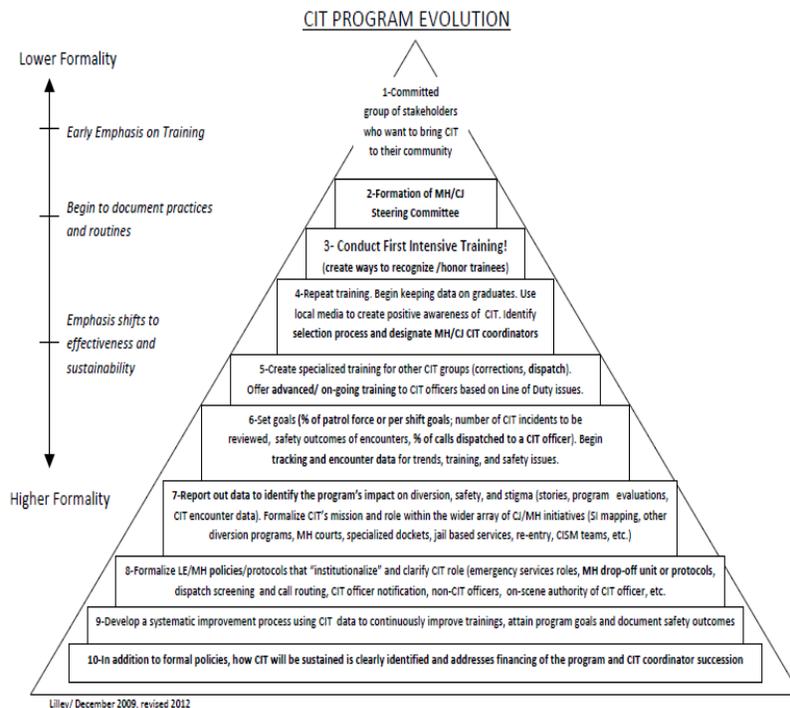
Columbiana County maintains two hospitals with no behavioral health units. The ratio of the population to mental health providers is 1160:1 (Source: 2018 County Health rankings). Its county jail is privately run by a Texas based company. In 2019, Columbiana County published the Columbiana County 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment which identified mental health and addiction/substance use as the number two priority topic. In the same assessment, youth suicide and depression risks were identified as a significant area of the population in need of services.

In 2017, a steering committee for CIT training was formed in partnership with the Columbiana County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board. The first training was held in 2018 (10 officers) and a second was held in 2019 (14 officers) resulting in a total of 24 law enforcement officers being trained in 11 of the 15 police departments in the Crisis Intervention Team 40-hour course. Of the 24 trained, 20 remain employed in their departments. The training is funded by the Columbiana County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board and NAMI Ohio. In 2020, Columbiana County CIT applied for a grant through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE). With the grant funding, Columbiana County CIT plans to hire a CIT coordinator and two regional coordinators to expand CIT programs throughout the county.

Currently, no contact information is being collected when law enforcement encounters a person in crisis. Requests for mental health policies from the Board to law enforcement agencies in the county yielded 3 departments with mental health policies.

Columbiana County has also participated in other initiatives related to the behavioral health and criminal justice partnerships. Prior to developing its 40-hour CIT training, the county held a 2-day mental health training for law enforcement. It has also held Mental Health First Aid Trainings throughout the county.

### C. CIT Program Evolution



All developing CIT programs go through common growth stages. Starting with a committed group of people who bring an initial training to their community to policy-driven, data-rich individual CIT law enforcement programs, the core elements provide a way to guide the growth of programs. While the success of any program is impacted uniquely by each community’s leadership commitment and resources, the CIT “Program Pyramid” depicts common stages of program development. As part of the peer review process, the reviewers assess Columbiana County CIT emerging from the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage to the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of development: repeat training, bring awareness to the Crisis Intervention Teams and begin to designate CIT coordinators.

CIT is more than just a 40-hour training course. It is an organizational model designed to help prevent people from crisis and if in crisis, refer them to the mental health system instead of the criminal justice system when possible. Where sound CIT programs exist, they include elements such as formalized department-level policies and the systematic collection, sharing and analysis of encounter information.

The main goal of CIT as a risk reduction program is to increase officer and consumer safety and divert individuals in a mental health crisis from jails to gain quicker access to much needed treatment services.

Since Columbiana County CIT is not yet at the point of having program elements like those listed beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> stage, this report will be formatted to stress the reviewers' assessment of the strengths and recommendations for improvement of the CIT training as well as outlining recommendations that address continued program development through the subsequent stages. The ultimate test of this peer review process will be if the report helps Columbiana County CIT strengthen their countywide CIT program through assisting their local CIT law enforcement agency programs, and begin coordinating and formally sharing police encounter information with mental health professionals.

#### D. Crisis Intervention Team Training

With only a few CIT trainings under their belt, Columbiana County CIT should be recognized for organizing and conducting comprehensive and locally relevant Crisis Intervention Team Trainings offered by knowledgeable presenters and instructors. This is most likely due to strong community support and a steering committee which is comprised of law enforcement, mental health professionals, a re-entry coordinator, and more. The Columbiana County Mental Health & Recovery Services Board has financially supported the training as well as provided stipends to law enforcement agencies to augment the cost of sending an officer to the training for 5 days. There are many training highlights that other CIT programs can glean from what Columbiana County CIT is doing in their training. Some of their training highlights are:

**Training Schedule.** Training begins on a Wednesday and is completed the following Tuesday. This unique concept breaks up the training schedule into two weeks and based upon evaluations appears to be a positive for all involved. Since the county is rural, the schedule accommodates the smaller departments. Also, it can be difficult for anyone to sit through a training for five days in a row, and the weekend break appears to provide relief for participants so that they can return to the training refreshed and ready to continue to learn. Lastly, many agencies are not as busy on Fridays. With the schedule as is, site visits are scheduled on Friday and role plays on the final day of Tuesday. This appears to work well for agencies permitting the site visits as participants arrive on a day with less agency commotion.

The schedule of training blocks is laid out in an orderly fashion and flow so that learning is scaffolded for knowledge and skills to build upon one another. The topics chosen are strong, including but not limited to: Introduction to Mental Illness, Youth and Mental Health, Substance Use and Co-occurring Disorders, Geriatric Issues, Veterans' Resources, Suicide Prevention and Civil Commitments. A local need was noticed for educating officers on the county's youth population, so an extra amount of attention and instruction is provided on youth in three separate training blocks. Site visits are conducted at several county providers offering participants with relevant in-person experiences that allow them to meet staff and observe how services are provided.

**Binders.** The binders provided to participants appear to be organized, user friendly, and resourceful. The business card section is a valuable idea. This is a great booklet that law enforcement can reference as

needed. As many CIT programs turn to reduce costs by providing alternatives to binders, Columbiana County CIT's binders are an excellent example of how useful and important the information can be when presented properly.

**Recovery Highlights.** The recovery highlights are a great asset to the training. Typically, hearing someone speak about personal struggles and achievements has a strong impact and allows for participants to learn more about mental health and/or substance use from someone who has lived it. This offers a unique and special perspective that officers may otherwise never be privileged to hear. Providing participants with several opportunities to hear and learn from consumers and family members is paramount in a CIT training and is done well in the Columbiana County CIT training.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Training Block Relevance to the Crisis Intervention Encounter**

All training blocks, especially those blocks outside the recommended core elements, should be filtered through the lens of a law enforcement officer for relevancy during an encounter with someone experiencing a mental health crisis. In CIT training, in general, training blocks and their presenters can find it difficult to relate their content to what officers are experiencing when responding to mental health crisis calls. Similarly, some training blocks have good information, but the training and the presenter fail to clearly define how the training topic relates to people with mental illness or people experiencing a mental health crisis. The Columbiana County CIT Training Steering Committee should look at all their training blocks to make sure each one provides practical information for officers to utilize during a mental health crisis call. If training blocks are found that do not clearly associate their content with a mental health crisis call, the Columbiana County CIT Training Steering Committee should work with presenters to create applicable content. One way to focus the training content to CIT relevancy is formalizing the entire curriculum by including general training objectives that each training block should meet. This will help presenters design their presentations in a similar manner, with greater relevancy, and meeting the expectations of the CIT Training Steering Committee.

### **2. Educate officers about Anosognosia and Diversity Issues**

Columbiana County CIT provides adequate background on the history of our understanding of mental illnesses and treatments. In addition, there should always be an emphasis on the observable characteristics of a variety of illnesses, signs of a mental health crisis and how to assess a person's mental state. Anosognosia is a condition that is related to the lack of insight that one has about their own illness. As a training topic, this medical condition is important for these reasons: it helps officers further understand the brain/chemistry aspects of mental illnesses; it is a major reason that many of those with psychotic disorders do not comply with treatment; and, because of this, it is a factor related to the subset of individuals who are at greater risk of unpredictability during police encounters. Many CIT programs include information about anosognosia in sessions related to dangerousness, psychosis, or as a subset of schizophrenia.

Diversity training is a core training element and should be integrated with all training blocks wherever possible. As our understanding of diversity evolves, we see it in races, cultures, morals, religions, and countless other possible identifying factors. It is relevant to see mental illness as a diversity issue and to help officers see things beyond their own lens. By educating officers that others perceive the world differently based upon their circumstances and experience, will help them build empathy, relate to their community members, and assist them with making more informed decisions. Recovery highlights, as provided in the training, are a good example of showing officers different life perspectives. Columbiana County CIT is encouraged to integrate this theme into other training blocks and clearly illuminate diversity aspects as it relates to a specific training block.

### **3. Use of Force in Relation to the Crisis Intervention Encounter**

While there is a training block on “Civil Commitments,” it appears the focus is on the Ohio Emergency Hospitalization law, local crisis services and procedural concerns. While there is no question these are all relevant and important subjects to cover, Columbiana County CIT should consider expanding this topic area to include education on the ethical and constitutional use of force to be used during mental health crisis encounters. Since mental health crisis calls can result in a use of force by law enforcement, officers need to be aware of the amount of force they’re allowed to use when dealing with someone who has not committed a crime and/or is functioning under a diminished mental capacity. These two case laws provide guidance on force related issues for non-criminal incidents:

- Aldaba V. Pickens 10<sup>th</sup> circuit Court
- Estate of Corey Hill V Miracle 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court

Other case laws that could be referenced or used to create a training outline on force related issues for non-criminal incidents include:

- Fisher v. Hardin
- Griffin v. Coburn
- Byrd v. Long Beach

Excited Delirium is a syndrome that can mask itself as a mental health crisis; force is often utilized to bring a person under control. Officers should be educated on this medical issue as it relates to their safety, the proper use of force during these types of encounters, and the possibility of death to the subject, thus requiring immediate emergency medical care once under control.

### **4. Compile and Analyze Evaluations**

It is recommended that the Columbiana County CIT Training Steering committee take the evaluations from each training and compile the findings to examine the training program’s (or a training block’s) success. By collecting and analyzing the information provided by participants, the steering committee may be able to identify themes and characteristics about the overall training, training blocks and/or presenters. The purpose of identifying these themes about various elements of the training is to help the steering committee make decisions related to improving the training’s effectiveness. When specific

changes are implemented based upon feedback, the steering committee will be able to gauge success through future evaluations in relation to various elements they attempted to address.

## **5. Understanding the Adult Learner**

In general, law enforcement officers appear to be very practical and direct in their approach to learning. Often task-oriented, many officers subscribe to the philosophy of “...just tell me what to do and I’ll do it.” Officers (adult learners) are often concerned and challenged with:

- Motivation to learn
- Why they should learn something
- How learning will help them specifically
- Have prior knowledge and experience that forms a foundation for their learning
- Interest in task-oriented learning that supports with their own profession

Keeping the adult learner in mind, Columbiana County CIT should explore ways to connect to law enforcement officers who may enter the training challenged with a lack of motivation and/or prior experiences that have created a preconceived notion about people with mental illness or responding to mental health crisis calls. Columbiana County CIT is encouraged to help presenters relate their training blocks to the adult learner and professionals who have experience (positive and negative) in their field. Utilize the “WIIFM” model with the officers...What’s In It For Me? By proposing this question, the instructors can make sure the content of their information is relevant and useful in a crisis encounter.

Related to task-oriented learning, officers are taught de-escalation skills and expected to practice them during the training (typically at the end of the week). Scenario-based training is an effective way to teach and reinforce a skill set that officers need to safely de-escalate crisis encounters. Many CIT programs are providing more opportunities earlier in the training week to expose officers to de-escalation skills and expectations for communication during crisis encounters. Videos, role-plays, and other interactive learning opportunities throughout the training may engage officers further and improve their performance at the end of the week during their role-play scenarios.

## **E. Crisis Intervention Team Program Development**

The Columbiana County CIT program is in its infancy. As such, developing the CIT program should be the priority for Columbiana County CIT. It is also recommended that Columbiana County CIT engage law enforcement agencies based upon their level of readiness and willingness to implement this community policing model. At this stage in development, it is recommended that Columbiana County follow the directions set forth in the Crisis Intervention Team Core Elements (September 2007); the Ohio Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) Strategic Plan (August 2015); and the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs: A Best Practice Guide For Transforming Community Responses To Mental Health Crises (August 2019). These guides are available on the CJ CCoE website.

As stated in the Crisis Intervention Team Core Elements (2007) “In order for a CIT program to be successful, several critical core elements should be present. These elements are central to the success of the program’s goals.” Columbiana County CIT should review the core element recommendations annually and develop a strategic approach to developing and implementing its program moving forward.

With the above recommendations in mind, Columbiana County CIT has many encouraging components already in place:

**Commitment to Improvement:** The peer reviewers are impressed and encouraged to see the commitment of Columbiana County CIT and their CIT Coordinators to participate in a peer review at this stage in their development. The peer reviewers believe this early assessment will lay the foundation for a successful CIT program in the future.

**Sustainability & Funding:** Current funding for CIT training and law enforcement stipends make it possible for Columbiana County law enforcement to commit and participate with CIT Training. With under 10% of law enforcement trained in the Crisis Intervention Team Model, this funding commitment is crucial so that more officers can have the initial 40-hour CIT class. While new officers are being trained, Columbiana County CIT has committed to acquiring further funds to develop their program. In April 2020, Columbiana County CIT applied for funding through the CJ CCoE to expand their program. The funds will be used to create and implement uniform policies and procedures throughout the county, along with a uniform contact sheet for participating law enforcement jurisdictions. Furthermore, two regional coordinators will join an existing coordinator to direct CIT efforts in one of the two major geographic concentrations of development and population in the county, the northern and southern corridors.

## **Recommendations**

With the Columbiana County CIT Steering Committee transitioning from a training focus to a program focus, it is recommended that they meet regularly with specific objectives for each meeting.

### **1. Develop Partnerships**

Based on information obtained during this peer review, Columbiana County CIT would benefit from a structured relationship between the mental health system and law enforcement agencies in the county. A designated contact person within each law enforcement agency would be the bridge between the two systems and act as a liaison in matters related to specific crisis situations, contact information/data, policies and procedures, recognition, and most importantly, expectations of each other’s systems. Additionally, increased communication will help with a coordinated process for receiving a person in crisis from officers to emergency psychological services.

**Community Ownership:** to assist the Columbiana County CIT Steering Committee, it is recommended that more people with lived experience (mental health and/or substance use) be recruited (e.g., Certified Peer Supporter) to give a voice for consumers and their family members. Their experience can add value to planning, evaluation, and outreach to other consumers and their family members.

## **2. Implement contact sheets when encountering people in crisis; Comprehensive Data Collection**

Currently there is no documentation process for identifying and tracking police encounters for people in crisis. Documenting contacts and passing them along to mental health professionals allows for the possibility for case management to intervene and outpatient services to be employed. In order to get buy-in from police agencies, the CIT Steering Committee should promote how contact information will potentially lessen police encounters and thus, lower the number of transports by police to crisis services. Once contact information is being documented, a system should be designed for police to easily pass the information to mental health for follow-up with people in crisis in the community.

In addition, through different types of data collection, Columbiana County CIT can identify trends, safety issues, disposition leanings, familiar faces, gaps in the systems and opportunities for improvement. It is recommended that Columbiana County CIT reach out to mental health receiving centers, crisis lines, emergency medical services, the coroner's office (suicide data), the county jail, etc., to collect data that can provide a more complete picture of the crisis response system. Columbiana County CIT should compile and analyze the information to determine what is most relevant to the CIT program and set goals based upon the findings.

## **3. Develop Law Enforcement Level Policies and Procedures**

"Policies and procedures are a necessary component of CIT. They provide a set of guidelines that direct the actions of both law enforcement and mental health officials" (Crisis Intervention Team Core Elements, September 2007). Crisis Intervention policies and procedures with a Crisis Intervention Team focus would bring Columbiana County law enforcement agencies into alignment with the goals & objectives of a CIT program. The motivation to review and revise policies are threefold: First, the current law enforcement policy examples provided to the peer reviewers were general and broad and did not have a specific Crisis Intervention Team focus applicable to a CIT program. Secondly, updated policies can provide guidance and uniformity across all agencies. They can provide specific guidelines and expectations to all officers when encountering a person in a mental health crisis. Lastly, comprehensive crisis intervention policies can provide continuity when leadership and personnel changes occur. The peer reviewers were pleased to see that policy development was included as an action item in the 2020 expansion grant request. In addition, the CJ CCoE can provide technical assistance in developing new policies and procedures in order to make sure a crisis encounter is safer, smoother and less traumatic for people in crisis and the officers encountering them.

## **4. Recognize CIT Officers**

The Columbiana County CIT program needs to publicly recognize and honor CIT officers for their commitment to the fundamentals of crisis intervention and/or for heroic actions in a crisis situation. When the honor is bestowed, maximize exposure through traditional media, social media, newsletters, or annual banquets. It is further recommended that the award be presented by the highest governmental official(s) in the county. This strategy can increase community awareness of CIT, educate key decision makers about the program, and encourage other officers and their departments to participate so that they too can be recognized for exemplary service in crisis intervention in their communities.

## **5. Increase Awareness**

The citizens of Columbiana County need to know about the Crisis Intervention Team and how to access and identify a CIT officer. It is recommended that the CIT program invest in a marketing campaign to increase the awareness of the program throughout the county. It is further recommended that CIT coordinators speak to potential allies including consumers, family members, advocacy groups, mental health providers, faith based groups, and schools to inform them about these specially trained officers, and to request them for incidents where a mental health crisis is present.

Technical assistance to all the recommendations is available through the CJ CCoE.