



# OHIO CIT NEWS



Summer 2020



## Dispatchers Play a Vital Role in Mental Health Crisis Calls



By Dispatcher Samantha Fickes, MPA  
Cuyahoga Falls Police Department

Recently, I answered a 911 call only to hear a woman screaming through her phone. She was so hysterical I was unable to understand anything she said; I only knew that she was in some sort of distress. I was lucky that she called from a landline, so I was able to immediately dispatch emergency personnel to her home. To try to help her as well as ascertain what the situation was for responding officers, I tried to calm her and engage her in conversation. This could have been a call for a domestic issue, a medical issue, a mental health issue, or many other things. I calmly spoke to her, trying to get her attention while using the best de-escalation skills I could muster. When she began to calm, she started expressing to me that she was scared...scared that she did not know when she would be able to go back to work...scared that she may not even have a job to go back to due to the pandemic. She was distraught in not knowing what the future held for her, and at this time, saw no end in sight for the pandemic or quarantine. Her world was collapsing, and she had no control over stopping it.

I reassured her that I was sending her help and that we just wanted to make sure that she was safe. I also asked her if she had thought about or attempted to harm herself. She told me that she had scissors in her hand and was actively cutting herself. With that information, I now had two further objectives: dispatch paramedics to check her medically and try to get her to put down the scissors before she seriously injured herself and before officers arrived. By listening to her fears and through our conversation, I was able to convince her to put the scissors down while she waited for police and paramedics. By the time they arrived, she was much calmer than when she first dialed 911 and was able to speak with officers about what was going on. Thankfully, she had only minor injuries. The officers spoke with her about going to the hospital for a mental health assessment and she agreed willingly.

Dispatchers deal with a wide range of calls every day. One type of call that has become more and more common is callers who are going through a mental health crisis. The way a dispatcher handles these calls can greatly affect the outcome for the caller and the officers, therefore, it is imperative that dispatchers are well trained on how to best handle these types of calls and to route them to a CIT officer.

This call is a great example of mental health calls handled in dispatch centers every day. Unfortunately, dispatchers have only their hearing to assess the kind of call they're dealing with. It is important for dispatchers to not only listen to what is being said, but how it is being said, along with

whatever noises are in the background. In this case, while the woman was screaming, there were no other noises in the background, leading me to believe that this was not some sort of domestic issue. Her screams appeared to be from someone who was upset and not of someone in physical pain. None of this I could confirm until she spoke to me, but observing these clues was helpful in assessing what was happening.

Speaking in a calm steady voice is one of the biggest tools that dispatchers can use to help calm people in crisis. Many times, those dealing with a mental health crisis are in a heightened emotional state, and the dispatcher modeling a calm rational voice can help soothe the person. As a dispatcher, if you amplify your voice and sound excited, this will only contribute to keeping the caller in a heightened emotional state. Only when the caller is de-escalated, can dispatchers begin to gather information about what is going on; it is important to...

- acknowledge that they are upset and that they are going through a difficult time.
- not downplay their issue or make them feel as if they are insignificant and an inconvenience.
- reassure callers that help is coming, and that the officers responding want to help them and are not there to hurt, judge, or punish them.
- not make promises that a certain action will or will not be taken by officers. Trust can be lost when promises are broken between the caller, dispatchers, and officers. This could cause officers to have a harder time assisting the person and create distrust in the future if they experience another mental health crisis.
- never alienate the caller but reassure that we want to help them in their current situation. A dispatcher's demeanor and approach can significantly affect a person's willingness to accept help and ultimately the outcome of a mental health crisis call.

I encourage every dispatcher to attend Crisis Intervention Team training or a CIT dispatcher companion course. Promote developing a CIT program within your agency and policies that route mental health crisis calls to CIT officers. Through a comprehensive CIT program (which includes dispatchers), our community members experiencing a mental health crisis are more likely to be served in a safe compassionate manner that they all deserve.

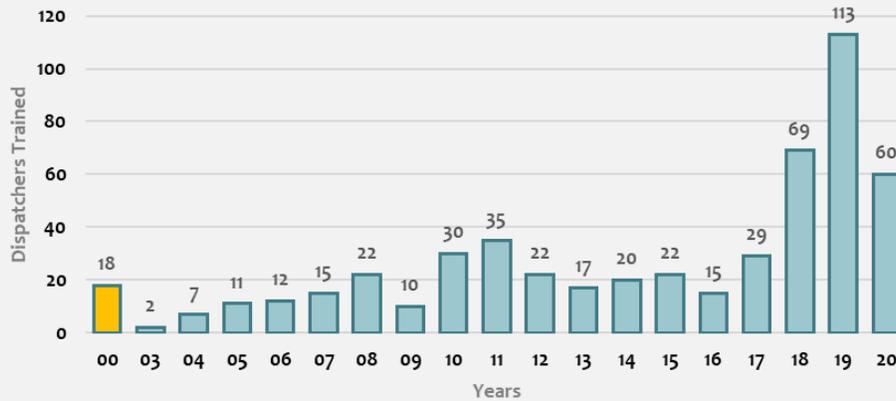
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## Interesting Factoids about CIT training for Dispatchers and Call-takers in Ohio from 2000-2020

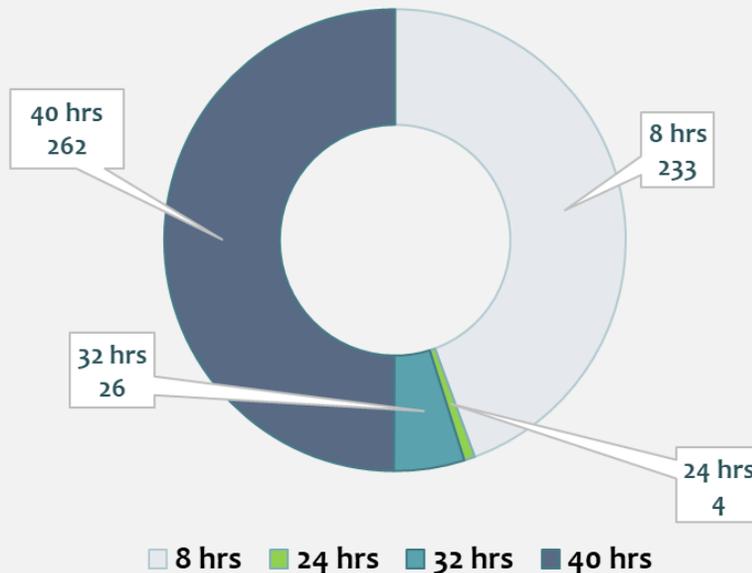
- ✓ Ohio dispatchers have been included in CIT training since at least 2003.
- ✓ The CJ CCoE has CIT training records for 525 Dispatcher/Call-taker professionals from 138 agencies.
- ✓ 238 of the 525, or 45% of Dispatchers received training in the past three years spanning 2018-2020, following the first Dispatcher Training of Trainers in Ohio in February 2017.
- ✓ For over half of these trained professionals, 55% (288) participated in the full version of the course, while the remaining engaged in companion 8-24hr courses.
- ✓ 47 counties have trained at least one Dispatcher.

## Dispatcher Training 2000-2020

The orange column (2000) indicates unknown training dates



## Dispatcher Training by Course Length



## Resources

**Tri-State (Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana) First Responder Peer Support Team** recognizes and responds to first responders or family members experiencing emotional or physical symptoms from exposure to acute or chronic high stress incidents. Authority for the team lies with the Hamilton County, Ohio Fire Chief's Association. To page a peer support manager for assistance, call the Hamilton County, Ohio Communication Center at (513) 825-2280 or (513) 825-2260.

<http://www.hamiltoncountyfirechiefs.com/tri-state-peer-support-team.html>

**The Ohio 9-1-1 Program Office** coordinates and facilitates communication concerning 9-1-1 issues among state, federal, regional and local 9-1-1 and public safety communications officials. In addition to coordination activities, a variety of resources are available on the website, including Continuing Education Training Modules posted on YouTube. See the resources tab at <https://911.ohio.gov/>

**Columbia Lighthouse Project** disseminates the Columbia Protocol, i.e., the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). Training is not required, and you do not need to be a mental health professional to use the protocol; however, training is available online. <https://cssrs.columbia.edu/training/training-options/>

**Call for example dispatch scenarios** – several Ohio CIT partners would like to receive example dispatch scenarios for utilization during their local dispatch CIT trainings. We would like to post these example scenarios on the CJ CCoE website. Please submit your local dispatch scenarios to Haley Farver at [hfarver@neomed.edu](mailto:hfarver@neomed.edu) by July 27, 2020.

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## Montgomery County Completed Dispatcher CIT Training in June 2020



Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Board is proud to graduate five dispatchers in CIT.



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## Mahoning County CIT Officer of the Year



The Mahoning County Commissioners honored Sgt. Glenn Patton of Boardman Police Department for being named Mahoning County CIT Officer of the Year. To read more, please visit [www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2020/06/boardmans-sgt-patton-receives-county-honor/](http://www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2020/06/boardmans-sgt-patton-receives-county-honor/)

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## Ohio Officers Recognized for 20 Years of CIT Service

Forty-nine Ohio law enforcement officers were recognized for twenty years of service as CIT officers in May 2020. Each officer received a certificate of appreciation signed by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, a special commemorative 20-year CIT pin and a letter of gratitude from leadership of the partners that advance and support CIT in Ohio: the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE), the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI Ohio) and the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS).

Of the eighty officers who completed one of the three CIT training courses held in Ohio in 2000 – two in Summit and one in Lucas County - 49 (61%) remain active with CIT today: 27 across seven jurisdictions in Summit County, 18 in Toledo (Lucas County), two in Hancock County (one each in Findlay P.D. and Hancock County Sheriff's Office) and two in Lancaster P.D. (Fairfield County).

The celebrated officers include:

**Summit County** - Officers Chad Johnson, Kevin Lohse and Martin Rogers (Cuyahoga Falls Police Department); Officer Robert Gilbert (Richfield Township Police Department); Deputies Scott Cottle, David Hills and Lee Hoskins (Summit County Sheriff's Office); Officers Brian Moore and Kenneth Rayl (University of Akron Police Department); Officers Kelly Brown and Adam Clark, Sergeant James Donohue, Officers Franklin Harrah, David Haverstick, James Hentosz, Robert Horvath, David Laughlin, Gregory Mesko, John Mostar, and Steven Prough, and Captain Michael Yohe (Akron Police Department); Officers Joseph Gaffney and Tera Johnstonbaugh (Springfield Police Department); and Lieutenant Michael Boyd and Officers Steven Penwell, Donald Stehlik, Jr. and James Wuliger (Northcoast Behavioral Health Hospital Police Department).

**Lucas County** - Officers Robert Britt, James Brown, Phillip Carroll, Beth Cooley, Kevin Dumas, Thomas Ford, Roberto Garcia, William Goodlet, Burna Guy, Kerry Hayes, Michael Haynes, Joseph Heffernan, Donald Mitchell, Carole Scherer, Peter Siwa, Gregory Szymanski, Michael Talton and Kimberly Violanti (Toledo Police Department).

**Fairfield County** - Officer Mel Leckrone and Sergeant Bryan Underwood (Lancaster Police Department).

**Hancock County** - Deputy Barry Boutwell (Hancock County Sheriff's Office) and Officer Todd Routson (Findlay Police Department).



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## Welcome New CIT Coordinators

- Tabitha Angello Lorain County
- Whitney Loftis Preble County

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## From NAMI Ohio

**CIT pins, patches, Quick Reference Guides, and Hearing Distressing Voices training kits are available upon request. Coming soon are CIT lapel bars (alternative to round pins).**



## Welcome new Deputy Director and CIT Partner

Luke Russell is the new Deputy Director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio. He came to NAMI Ohio because of his deep passion for individuals and families facing mental illness. As a family member and having worked for non-profit providers, joining the NAMI Ohio team to improve the quality of life and ensure dignity and respect to individual with mental illness is a natural fit. Luke has his undergraduate degree from The Ohio State University and a Master of Health Administration from Ohio University. He has held leadership positions in both non-profit management and government relations. In these roles, Luke has worked on program development, campaigns, public affairs and government relations. His focus at NAMI will include advocacy on NAMI Ohio's key priorities, coordination of Crisis Intervention Teams as well as the Stepping Up Initiative from the consumer and family perspective and reducing the stigma of mental illness so prevalent in the culture.

We welcome Luke to our CIT partnership! He can be reached at [luke@namiohio.org](mailto:luke@namiohio.org) or 614-224-2700, ext. 235.

## CIT Mini Grants and Law Enforcement Scholarships

**The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence and NAMI Ohio collaborate to make mini grants and scholarships available to Ohio CIT training programs. Funding for mini grants and scholarships is made possible through awards from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio Attorney General's Office, and the Office of Criminal Justice Services.**

### **CIT Mini Grants to Support full CIT Courses: \$1,800**

Mini grants in the amount of \$1,800 are available to offset the costs of hosting full CIT courses or academies. Communities can request a mini grant for each 40-hour (or equivalent) course held between January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

### **CIT Mini Grants for Advanced, Refresher, or Companion Training: \$1,000**

Mini grants in the amount of \$1,000 are available for those communities wishing to offer advanced, refresher, or companion trainings. This includes training that does not meet the full 40-hours requirement but seeks to provide advanced topic training to existing CIT officers, refresher training to existing CIT officers, or companion training to key CIT partners, e.g., dispatchers, fire/EMS, behavioral health providers.

### **CIT Mini Grants for First-Time Implementation of CIT Dispatcher Training: \$500**

A limited number of supplemental mini grants in the amount of \$500 are available through June 30, 2020 for those communities wishing to develop and implement their first CIT Dispatcher Training. These funds CAN supplement the mini grants referenced above and are strictly limited to those communities that have not offered dispatch training in the past.

### **CIT Scholarships for Law Enforcement Agencies to send Personnel to CIT Training: \$1,800 and \$1,000**

Scholarships of \$1,800 are available for Law Enforcement agencies sending police officers for the first time to complete the full 40-hours CIT course. These scholarships prioritize agencies who have not participated in CIT training in the past. A limited number of scholarships are available to agencies that have participated in the past but have financial constraints affecting their ability to send additional officers.

A limited number of scholarships of \$1,000 are available through June 30, 2020 for law enforcement agencies sending dispatchers and corrections officers to a full CIT training.

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*All future mini grant and scholarship requests should be made by the county CIT Program Coordinator and made to Mekal Banyasz at the CJ CCoE: [mbanyasz@neomed.edu](mailto:mbanyasz@neomed.edu).*

For all mini grant requests, please provide the following information. If you previously submitted a request, it is not necessary to submit a new request. If you want to add trainings to your existing request, you can do so through an email to Mekal Banyasz, identifying the type of training to be held and the dates of training.

1. Type of training (full CIT course, advanced, refresher, companion)
2. Date of the training

3. A list of the members of your CIT Steering Committee
4. Name and address of the entity to whom the check should be made payable (in the case of scholarships, this should be specific law enforcement agencies)
5. Name of law enforcement agency and name and rank/position of specific personnel who will attend training (required for scholarships only)
6. Acknowledgment that you will forward a completed roster of all graduates and the course agenda/curriculum outline to Mekal Banyasz (mbanyasz@neomed.edu) upon the completion of your training

All mini grants will be paid after completion of the course and once the course roster and agenda/curriculum outline are submitted to Mekal Banyasz, [mbanyasz@neomed.edu](mailto:mbanyasz@neomed.edu).

## The Value of Peer Reviews

Many Ohio Counties have gone through the Peer Review process over the years and gained valuable insight and information on improving not only their CIT course but also their CIT program. A three-member team is sent to your community to meet with your Steering Committee to mutually finalize the team's findings after the community provides the team with materials and evaluations from your course and program. Of special interest, your community CIT program will receive **\$1,000** just for going through the process. Make sure you are striving to incorporate the Core Elements of what makes a CIT program so successful as developed by The University of Memphis CIT Center, the Ohio CIT Coordinators group and CIT International.

For more information or to set up a review of your CIT program during fiscal year 2021, July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021, please contact Jeff Futo at [Jeff.futo@gmail.com](mailto:Jeff.futo@gmail.com).

## Summer 2020 Ohio CIT Courses

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| • Montgomery County  | July 13-17                                       |
| • <del>Lake County</del>                                     | <del>July 27-31 (Canceled Due to COVID-19)</del> |
| • Lucas County   | August 3-7                                       |
| • Franklin County  | August 10-14                                     |
| • Stark County   | August 17-21                                     |
| • Hamilton County  | August 24-28                                     |
| • Gallia, Jackson, and Meigs Counties                        | September 8, 10, 15, 17 and 22                   |
| • Seneca, Sandusky, Wyandot, Huron, Erie and Ottawa Counties | September 9, 16, 23, 30 and October 7            |
| • Cuyahoga County  | September 14-18                                  |
| • Franklin County  | September 14-18                                  |
| • Portage County   | September 21-25                                  |
| • Hamilton County  | September 21-25                                  |
| • Richland County  | September 28-October 2                           |
| • Paint Valley   | September 28-October 2                           |
| • Summit County  | September 28-October 2                           |

**Please advise Haley Farver at [hfarver@neomed.edu](mailto:hfarver@neomed.edu) of your planned CIT Courses for 2020!**

# Ohio CIT Program Coordinator or Contact Information

*Note: information is subject to change*

<b>Allen/Auglaize/Hardin</b> Rick Skilliter <a href="mailto:rskilliter@pvff.org">rskilliter@pvff.org</a>
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## National News and Updates

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### CIT International – Conference Announcement

CIT International is transitioning the 2020 CIT International conference in Pittsburgh to an online virtual conference. Registration fees will be reimbursed, and speakers will be contacted soon. More information will be forthcoming at [www.citinternational.org/events](http://www.citinternational.org/events).



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### Opinion Article – Washington Post

Pete Earley published an Opinion article in the Washington Post June 15, 2020: *Mental illness is a health issue, not a police issue*. To access the article, please visit

[www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/15/mental-illness-is-health-issue-not-police-issue/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/15/mental-illness-is-health-issue-not-police-issue/)

