



SO WHAT IS CIT?

Police officers are frequently called upon to respond to crisis situations, many times involving persons with serious mental illness. Historically officers who respond to these calls often lack any specialized training or knowledge in dealing with the mentally ill and their families. In 1988, The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model emerged in Memphis, Tennessee, and is often referred to as the “Memphis Model.”

The CIT Program seeks to bridge this gap between police response and mental health care by forming a partnership with behavioral health and human services professionals, consumers, their families and law enforcement. The alliance was the catalyst in developing and implementing a safer, proactive method for resolving explosive crisis situations. The CIT Program, is just that, a “Program” of which just one component is the training of law enforcement. But CIT is much more, built on a foundation of community collaboration and the development of a responsive and accessible Community Behavioral Health Crisis System.

CIT programs are designed to educate police officers on effective interaction with individuals who may be in crisis and/or consumers of the mental health system. Incorporated in this training is the belief that a relationship with professionals of the mental health system, as well as family members of consumers, is crucial to providing the best possible care for these individuals as well as for resolving many situations that arise from their unique needs.

Numerous disciplines assist with the facilitation of the Advanced Officer 40-Hour CIT training and ongoing access to services. Experts from various fields, throughout the community, all work together on this program. The CIT Program, however, is much broader than simply training. Equally important redesigning how behavioral health services are delivered in the community and ensuring that seamless access for law-enforcement becomes the norm.

CIT programs create community collaboration and improves lives. Some of the benefit from this program are noteworthy, including the goals of:

- **Increased Safety:** Education on mental health issues increases safety for officers and citizens through specialized tactics, techniques, and communication training.
- **Catalyst for Improved Access to Treatment:** CIT programs seek to bridge the gap between police response and mental health care. By creating relationships between law enforcement and mental health services, CIT facilitated agreements to get people quickly transferred to behavioral health treatment, while reducing the burden on police. Speedy transfers to treatment save law enforcement time and money, and reduce the need for costly emergency psychiatric services.
- **Diversion:** Individuals with a mental illness may be diverted from the criminal justice system into the behavioral health system for community treatment, when appropriate. The linking of individuals to appropriate treatment, frequently has a positive impact on fostering recovery and reducing recidivism.
- **Collaboration:** Through the establishment of partnerships and relationships developed through CIT with healthcare professionals, consumers, and related organizations, further collaborative opportunities and programs can be utilized, when addressing law enforcement concerns/problems through a community based policing model.
- **Professionalism and Community Confidence:** Develop increased professionalism and community confidence in law enforcement agencies.

Through this combination of training, collaboration and improvements in accessing community behavioral health systems, CIT makes a measurable effect. When a system is place that is responsive to the needs of law enforcement officers, officers will access these behavioral health crisis facilities/services. This improved access and utilization results in countless reductions in incarceration, linkages to critical long-term treatment opportunities and criminal justice cost savings, thus improving the quality of life for all in our community. **CIT is Community-Based Problem Solving Policing at its Best!**