

Crisis Intervention Team Programs

Core Elements

Ongoing Elements

1. Partnerships: Law Enforcement, Advocacy, Mental Health
2. Community Ownership: Planning, Implementation & Networking
3. Policies and Procedures

Operational Elements

4. CIT: Officer, Dispatcher, Coordinator
5. Curriculum: CIT Training
6. Mental Health Receiving Facility: Emergency Services

Sustaining Elements

7. Evaluation and Research
8. In-Service Training
9. Recognition and Honors
10. Outreach: Developing CIT in Other Communities

Core Components

1) Community Collaboration: Vitally important to successful CIT programs is building relationships and breaking down silos between organizations and stakeholders. Community ownership should occur in all phases of CIT programs--initial planning, curriculum development, policies and procedures, conflict-resolution and ongoing problem solving. This broad-based, grassroots community collaboration is what makes CIT programs sustainable over time, especially during challenging fiscal and political times.

2) A Vibrant and Accessible Crisis System: An outcome of productive community collaboration is the transformation of a crisis response system that is vibrant, responsive, and easily accessible. Communities should work to provide a 24/7 crisis response, a “no wrong door” philosophy, and a 15 minute or under turnaround time to get first responders back on the streets. Depending on your community (urban, suburban, rural, frontier), these crisis system models may need to be creatively adapted to meet your needs.

3) Training for law enforcement and other first responders: The 40-hour training curriculum is designed to be taught by local specialists from the law enforcement, behavioral health, and peer/advocate field. Upon completion of the course, officers/first responders are better equipped to:

- Understand common signs and symptoms of mental illnesses and co-occurring disorders

- Recognize when those signs and symptoms represent a crisis.
- Safely de-escalate individuals experiencing behavioral health crises
- Utilize community resources and diversion strategies to provide assistance.

Overview of Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)

- There are more than 3,000 Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs across the US, in almost every state and the District of Columbia.
- CIT is built on—and managed by—a community steering committee of law enforcement agencies, mental health agencies, and mental health advocates.
- CIT goes beyond law enforcement training to improve policy, system coordination, and mental health services.

CIT Helps Law Enforcement

- By developing the mental health crisis response system, CIT reduces the reliance on police to respond to mental health crisis events.
- In a CIT program, mental health advocates and mental health agencies support law enforcement agencies by helping to identify the best community resources to respond to difficult mental health crisis calls. These partners also help develop specialized training for officers and dispatchers on recognizing and responding to mental health crisis situations.
- CIT training helps officers and deputies safely de-escalate a mental health crisis and divert individuals to services, instead of jail, when appropriate.
- CIT improves crisis system coordination, reducing the time that an officer or deputy must spend in transferring a person for an emergency psychiatric evaluation. Instead of waiting many hours in the emergency department, officers can get back to patrol more quickly.
- CIT helps people with mental illness access mental health treatment and recovery supports, reducing the need for repeat calls for service.

CIT Helps Mental Health Agencies

- By partnering with advocates and law enforcement, public mental health agencies have a unique path to educating legislators about the need for mental health services and avoiding damaging cuts to mental health services.

- Criminal justice partners, advocates, and other service providers support mental health agencies in identifying people with complex needs and strategize together about ways to proactively reach out and avoid repeat crisis situations.
- CIT program partners identify gaps in the crisis response system and supportive services and mobilize a strong group of allies to lobby for the needed services in a community.

CIT Helps Individuals in Crisis and Their Families

- CIT enhances access to crisis services, reducing contact between people in crisis and law enforcement and the criminal justice system.
- CIT raises community awareness about mental illness and provides opportunities to advocate for needed mental health services and support.
- CIT training helps law enforcement officers respond to a person in crisis more safely and empathically, reducing the trauma that individuals and their families experience.
- CIT promotes recovery by reducing trauma, keeping people out of the justice system, and connecting people to needed mental health services and support.
- CIT officers avoid taking people to jail whenever possible.
- CIT reduces the stigma associated with mental health conditions by reducing the role of law enforcement and the criminal justice system in crisis response