



CIT INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Improving Responses to People in Crisis

MORE THAN JUST TRAINING: Community Collaboration • A Vibrant and Accessible Crisis System

• Police/First Responder Training • Behavioral Health Staff Training • Family/Consumer/Advocate Participation

About CIT International

CIT International is a non-profit organization supporting local, national and international efforts to improve responses to people affected by mental illness. With increased pressure on law enforcement to safely respond to encounters with people with mental illness in a manner consistent with recognizing mental illness as a disease and not a crime, CIT International brings stakeholders together to highlight best practice models, improve community partnerships and develop practices that equip communities to serve people affected by mental illness with respect and dignity.

About CIT Programs

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Model is a solution focused community response to helping people with mental illness. CIT programs bring stakeholders together from the law enforcement, behavioral health and advocacy sectors, along with people with lived experience with mental illness, to develop solutions for safely re-directing people in crisis away from the judicial system and into the health care system whenever appropriate.

Core Components of CIT Programs

- 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, 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 consumer/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 situation;
 - Safely de-escalate individuals experiencing behavioral health crises;
 - Utilize community resources and diversion strategies to provide assistance.

At the heart of effective CIT programs is officers who volunteer to be identified as a CIT officer and who are skilled and passionate about responding to these calls. Ongoing continuing education and advanced CIT training should be incorporated into the model.



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- 4) Behavioral Health Staff Training:** It is imperative that behavioral health staff develop an understanding of the role of law enforcement/first responders, and why they are trained to respond in ways that they do. This deeper understanding helps to provide insight and gain appreciation for what can otherwise be a culture divide. It is often beneficial for behavioral health staff to do ride-alongs with officers, and vice versa, for law enforcement to do home visits with case managers/therapists. It is also beneficial for law enforcement to provide training to front-line behavioral health workers on law enforcement culture. The goal is a deeper understanding and appreciation of one another's roles, leading to improved collaboration.
- 5) Family/Consumer/Advocate Participation:** People with lived experience provide invaluable insight in the 40 hour training, and consumers and family members are key resources in advocating for CIT programs and improved crisis services. Consumer and family involvement in CIT programs also helps to inform understanding of how law enforcement is trained, building reasonable expectations of what to anticipate when law enforcement is called. Families and advocates also provide important feedback about the overall crisis response system, contributing to continuous quality improvement initiatives.

Benefits of CIT Programs

- Positive community relationships
- Improved crisis response system
- Trained response to behavioral health crisis calls
- Reduced unnecessary arrests or use of force
- Reduced officer/citizen injuries
- Increased officer confidence in skills
- Reduced liability
- More efficient use of criminal justice resources, including increased jail diversion

About the CIT International Annual Conference:

The CIT International Annual conference, which takes place in August of each year, draws approximately 1,000 people largely from the law enforcement, behavioral health, and advocacy sectors. There are over 100 workshops related to topics involving the intersection of law enforcement, mental health, and criminal justice fields.

For more information about CIT or on how to become a member, please visit www.citinternational.org

CIT was founded in Memphis, TN in 1988 as a key component to the community's demand for safer first responder crisis services. CIT is founded on principles of dignity, understanding, kindness, hope and dedication. CIT has grown to include 49 states and four countries.