

Crisis Intervention Team Training

Frequently Asked Questions



- **Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)** are now active in close to 500 urban, suburban and rural police departments across the country. They are modeled after teams originally developed by the Memphis Police in 1988. In Connecticut, CIT teams are active in the New London, West Haven, Waterbury, Middlebury, Norwich, Plainfield, Putnam, Groton City, Willimantic, Windsor, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, Westport, Central Connecticut State University, Eastern CT State University, University of New Haven, Yale University, Mitchell College,, Yale New Haven Hospital and State Capitol police departments. More are being trained.
- **CIT is community-based.** As an innovative program, the CIT model encourages communities, families, law enforcement officers, and mental health professionals to work together.
 - “De-institutionalization” of mentally ill citizens has caused many to become homeless and potentially more violent which increases the chances of involvement with law enforcement.
 - Mental Health programs of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) are organized within five geographical regions across the state. Each geographic region contains centers designated for crisis response, community based mental health case management and other services.
 - Ideally, CIT training is offered to departments within the same DMHAS geographical region so officers can learn about specific services available within their region and build crucial relationships with those service providers at the training.
 - As police work more closely with families and develop relationships with resources within the community, the possibility for excessive force complaints, litigation and the inevitable backlash from the community can be reduced.
- **CIT training is tactically sound for officer safety.** *CIT training does not discourage the use of lethal force when an officer’s life or the lives of innocent bystanders are in danger.* Even the best trained CIT officer may have to use deadly force.
- **CIT training increases an officer’s confidence and provides additional information** to officers to make safe decisions. Too often, officers have had to respond to crisis calls where they feel at a disadvantage or placed in a no-win situation.
- **CIT teaches officers to think creatively.** Traditional police methods, myths about mental illness, and a lack of knowledge have caused fear and frustration for consumers of mental health services and their families. Unfortunately, it is usually after a tragedy that police departments look for change. As a proactive program, CIT acts as a model committed to preventing tragic situations when possible and finding “win-win” solutions for all persons concerned.

- **CIT trained officers are part of a department's regular patrol division.** A trained dispatcher alerts a CIT officer who is on duty at the time of a crisis to respond. **Response is immediate.**
 - By offering an immediate and calm approach, CIT officers reduce the likelihood of physical confrontations and personal injury to both the officer and the individual.
 - In Memphis, where CIT has been in operation since 1988, officer injury data has decreased seven-fold since the program's inception.
 - CIT trained officers learn safe, verbal and non-verbal de-escalation techniques that potentially reduce liability.
 - Ideally, 15-20% of a department's patrol division should be trained in CIT to ensure immediate response across all shifts.
- **CIT is an effective pre-arrest jail diversion program.** University of Tennessee studies have shown that the Memphis CIT program has resulted in a decrease in arrests rates for the mentally ill, an impressive rate of diversion into the health care system, and a resulting low rate of mental illness in their jails.
- **CIT instructors are an interdisciplinary team** of mental health providers and law enforcement professionals. They have included mental health professionals on the faculty of Yale University, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the CT Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement. Attorney Elliot Spector of the CT Criminal Law Foundation provides valuable information on Mental Health and the Law. Captain Kenneth Edwards, Jr.,(retired) of the New London Police Department and other seasoned law enforcement professionals round out the curriculum. No curriculum on this topic would be complete, however, without the voices of consumers of mental health services and their family members. Therefore, members of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill provide their perspective as members of this team.
- **Cost** – whenever possible, CIT training is offered to police departments at no cost. The training is currently being supported under a grant administered by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

**For more information
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***Pathfinder insignia worn by Connecticut Crisis
Intervention Team officers.***