



Talking Points

CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) is a model program designed to improve the outcomes of police interactions with people with mental illnesses.

CIT is a community collaboration, not just a training program. CIT officers are trained to prevent crises, and to de-escalate a crisis when it occurs. But, CIT is not just training. CIT is only effective when law enforcement, the mental health system and consumer and family advocates collaborate to make sure that when officers divert someone, the treatment system is willing and able to provide appropriate treatment.

CIT works for law enforcement. CIT provides officers tools for responding more safely and compassionately to people with serious mental illness. CIT gives officers options other than arrest and incarceration when they encounter people with mental illness. It improves public safety and reduces officer injuries, while reducing the amount of time officers spend dealing with mental disturbance calls. CIT officers report that they are more satisfied with CIT than with other jail diversion approaches.

CIT works for consumers. CIT improves consumers' safety: through the use of de-escalation techniques, officers can help prevent a crisis from deteriorating to the point where the use of force is likely. When they encounter a CIT officer, consumers are more likely to be transferred to treatment, to stay out of jails and emergency rooms, and receive treatment in the community.

CIT frees up public resources. By diverting people with serious mental illness from jails, CIT helps ensure that jails are used to incarcerate criminals, not people who require treatment. CIT also saves public resources by preventing people from deteriorating to the point they are incarcerated or require costly emergency services. Finally, CIT saves police time and money by creating an efficient system for transferring people from law enforcement custody to mental health treatment.

Tips

Be concise: If your message is short and simple to understand, decision-makers are more likely to hear you.

Tell your personal story, or connect CIT to local events, to be most effective. For example, if a crisis situation in your community leads to the death of an officer or a consumer, explain how CIT might prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Tailor your message to your audience: Decision-makers will be more receptive if you give them information that is relevant to them, delivered by someone they can relate to. For example, if you are talking with law enforcement, try to find a law enforcement advocate of CIT in your community or in a neighboring city or state, to make the case for you.

Present yourself as someone who can help: Everyone responds more favorably to those who approach them in a positive, constructive way, as opposed to those who approach them critically. For example, with law enforcement, it is always important to recognize how difficult the job of an officer is, and to present CIT as a strategy that can make that job easier.