

CIT Programs Give Police Officers New Approaches to Crisis Intervention

One of the biggest issues facing police officers today is how to respond to citizens experiencing mental health crises. Almost all law enforcement officials agree that there has been an increase in police calls that are mental health-related, and problems can occur with interactions between law enforcement and those with mental illness. In response to this, many police departments have developed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs in collaboration with community partners including the mental health system and consumer advocacy groups.

CIT programs aim to transform the crisis response system to minimize the times that law enforcement officers are the first responders to citizens in emotional distress. The goal is to reduce the number of arrests of those living with mental illness and help them to instead get the right treatment services they need, so they can successfully stay in the community. A first step in developing a CIT program is assessing the current crisis response system and advocating for enhancements. Another integral part of CIT development involves a week-long 40 hour training program on recognizing and responding to mental illness and related disorders.

Starting in 2014, the New York State Senate has provided funding to implement these CIT programs. [Don Kamin, PhD](#), Director for the Institute for Police, Mental Health and Community Collaboration, was in Niagara County last week where he and his team provided [extensive CIT training](#) to 18 sheriff's deputies and dispatchers, along with two Lockport police officers and six Niagara Falls police officers.

Click [here to read a Q & A with Dr. Kamin](#) to learn more about CIT, the long-term outlook for law enforcement, and the need for police department investment in technology and soft skills (in an article that ranks New York as the second best state to work as a police officer).



26 police officers and dispatchers from Niagara County are part of the newly formed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). [Click here to read more.](#)