



# CAREERS IN MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

## The Benefits of CIT

Not only can CIT programs bring community leaders together, they can also help keep people with mental illness out of jail and in treatment, on the road to recovery. That's because diversion programs like CIT reduce arrests of people with mental illness while simultaneously increasing the likelihood that individuals will receive mental health services. CIT programs also:

- Give police officers more tools to do their job safely and effectively. Research shows that CIT is associated with improved officer attitude and knowledge about mental illness. In Memphis, for example, CIT resulted in an 80% reduction of officer injuries during mental health crisis calls.
- Keep law enforcement's focus on crime. Some communities have found that CIT has reduced the time officers spend responding to a mental health call. This puts officers back into the community more quickly.
- Produce cost savings. It's difficult to estimate exactly how much diversion programs can save communities. But incarceration is costly compared to community-based treatment. For example in Detroit an inmate with mental illness in jail costs \$31,000 a year, while community-based mental health treatment costs only \$10,000 a year.

While the centerpiece of the CIT model is 40 hours of specialized training for a select group of officers that volunteer to become CIT officers, proponents stress that CIT is more than just training. CIT is an organizational and community intervention that involves changes in police department procedures as well as collaboration with mental health providers and

other community stakeholders. According to the model, officers volunteer to receive 40 hours of training provided by mental health clinicians, consumer and family advocates, and police trainers. Training includes information on signs and symptoms of mental illnesses; mental health treatment; co-occurring disorders; legal issues and de-escalation techniques.

Call dispatchers are trained to identify mental disturbance calls and assign these calls to CIT trained officers. CIT officers are trained to use de-escalation techniques if necessary and assess if referral to services or transport for mental health evaluation is appropriate. Additionally, during training and after, CIT officers familiarize themselves with a variety of mental health services in the community that they can utilize to resolve mental health related calls.

Mental health agencies often serve individuals that have contacts with the police and, at times, clinician and officer professional paths cross around client needs. These interactions may be initiated by clinicians when police assistance is needed to address safety issues. Clinicians may ask police to conduct well being checks or call them for assistance with a client in crisis. Clinicians may also advise clients and families to contact 911 for assistance in crisis situations, thus summoning the police. Police officers initiate these interactions when they transport persons in crisis to emergency rooms and crisis centers. They may also request clinician assistance, guidance and information when responding to situations involving persons in crisis. Thus, both groups frequently rely on each other for assistance.

## Crisis Intervention Team

As persons with mental illnesses and law enforcement become increasingly entangled, the collaboration of police and mental health service providers has become critical to appropriately serving the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises.

The lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in law enforcement officers serving as first responders to most crises. A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes of these encounters.

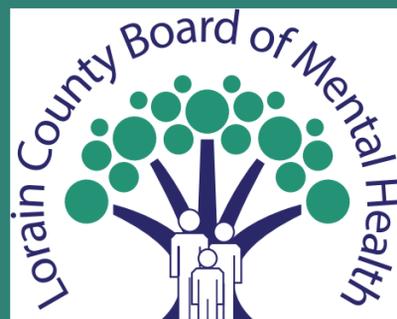
In over 2,700 communities nationwide, CIT programs create connections between law enforcement, mental health providers, hospital emergency services and individuals with mental illness and their families. Through collaborative community partnerships and intensive training, CIT improves communication, identifies mental health resources for those in crisis and ensures officer and community safety.



## CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

**Michael Mahony**  
Patrolman, Crisis Intervention Team Member (CIT Member)  
Elyria Police Department, 18 West Ave., Elyria

- Q. How did you become interested in your particular field?**  
A. My father was a police officer and was involved in Lorain County law enforcement for over 40 years. I was around the field my entire childhood so I don't ever remember wanting to be anything other than a police officer.
- Q. How did you get to where you are today? What path did your employment journey take?**  
A. I graduated from Adrian College (MI) in 2011 with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice with a Psychology minor. After college I attended the police academy at Lorain County Community College. I was hired by the Elyria Police Department once I graduated from the academy in 2012. In 2018, I attended a 40 hour training course to become a member of the Crisis Intervention Team.
- Q. What skills or certifications do you think are needed to be successful in this field?**  
A. To be a member of the CIT, a police officer must complete the 40 hour training course that instructs officers on the identification and evaluation of persons who may be experiencing a crisis or mental illness situation. The course also educates police officers on community mental health resources as well as communication techniques. Verbal communication and de-escalation, critical thinking, and attention to detail are all required skills for an effective CIT member.
- Q. What changes have you seen in the last few years in your industry?**  
A. Police officers need to be problem solvers and it has become evident that not every situation or incident can be solved with an arrest. Through crisis intervention training, police officers are given extra tools and resources to assist in resolving these situations in a manner that may truly help someone.
- Q. What is the best part of your job?**  
A. It is tremendously rewarding to be part of a team where you can see a positive impact being made. Every day is different and you are rarely confined to "four walls and a desk."
- Q. Do you have any words of advice for someone considering a career in your field?**  
A. If you want to make a difference and you want to be a positive influence in your community, a career in law enforcement provides that opportunity. Practice your verbal and written communication skills, stay diligent in your studies, and always do your best to help a fellow citizen.



The Lorain County Board of Mental Health (LCBMH) plans, funds, and monitors a comprehensive system of quality, public mental health services that enhance the health and well-being of the people of Lorain County. A citizen board of 18 community members determines which services are to be provided and funded based upon state requirements and community needs. The board members also monitor and evaluate delivery of those

services. Private, not-for-profit, and independent community agencies are contracted by the Lorain County Board of Mental Health to provide an array of mental health services. Services include counseling, prevention, consultation, peer support, crisis intervention, housing development and management, and vocational employment support.

## More Facts ?

**Mental Health Awareness Month** has been observed in May in the United States since 1949, reaching millions of people in the U.S. through the media, local events, and screenings.

### Additional Sources:

- Lorain County Board of Mental Health; <https://lcbmh.org>
- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI); Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs / <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Law-Enforcement-and-Mental-Health>
- The Crisis Intervention Team Model of Police Response to Mental Health Crises: A Primer for Mental Health Practitioners, National Center for Biotechnology Information/ [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles)

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Sources: Occupational Information Network, O\*Net Online, <http://online.onetcenter.org>.\*\* U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, <http://stats.bls.gov/coeHow.com>