

Utah's Mental Health Crisis Intervention Training Is National Model for Patrol and Detention

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Memphis, Tennessee is credited with the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program, which started back in 1988 after a high profile incident involving a mentally ill subject who was wielding a knife and threatening people with it. Police were forced to use deadly force to stop the public safety threat. Following the incident, law enforcement began to look specifically at the repeated contact between the subject and law enforcement and the part mental illness played in connecting the two. CIT is the unique and creative outcome needed to bridge the gap between the mental health system and law enforcement, thereby creating more appropriate dispositions and helping to alleviate recidivism in the criminal justice system among those with mental illnesses.

Since its inception CIT has become a best practice model. This program was originally developed with the purpose of training officers to respond to those in a mental health crisis with a more intelligent, understandable, and safe approach, while having a deeper level of understanding for the consumer (consumer of mental health resources) in relation to their mental illness. Due to its success, CIT now is in most major cities and over 2,300 law enforcement agencies around the nation. Other countries are starting to adopt programs based on the Memphis model. The CIT model is also being adopted in some U.S. detention facilities, including many located in Utah.

The first Utah CIT academy was conducted in 2001. Academies are administered throughout the State of Utah on a regional basis. Within each region, law enforcement services are partnered with mental health services to deliver the program. The program works to build relationships between law enforcement and local mental health providers so that together they can bring services to individuals with mental illness. It has been proven that this partnered relationship has helped and continues to help reduce criminal recidivism among the community members who have a mental illness.

Law enforcement officers share information with local mental health services or a detention agency when necessary to get the consumer the help they may need. Initially patrol officers and supportive non-sworn personnel who volunteer for this program go through a 40-hour, 1-week academy. There,

they are taught about several different mental illness issues such as non-psychiatric behaviors, age-related disorders, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, civil commitment laws, and liability issues. Along with classroom study of these and many other topics, students also visit places where they mingle with consumers of mental health services, such as the Utah State Hospital. Once the core curriculum is done the students go through scenario-based training where real life situations involving mentally ill consumers are used to help train students and allow them to practice the new tools they learned in the course.

This type of CIT training was and is designed to assist law enforcement officers to effectively respond to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. The CIT Officers learn to identify characteristics of various mental health disorders and provide the safest intervention possible for the consumer, the community, and the officers. CIT Officers gain an understanding of available options to assist in finding the best solution for the consumer and the community. Officers from uniformed patrol divisions volunteer to participate in the training.

Each year, more agencies become part of the team, and the cadre of trained officers continues to grow. CIT Utah has increased awareness about the importance of addressing mental health issues throughout the state. Mental health consumers and their families now ask for CIT Officers when contacting law enforcement for assistance. CIT Utah Regional Coordinators are involved in developing other local programs to assist with the reduction of mental health consumers' involvement in the criminal justice system through efforts with the local mental health authority and through statewide efforts with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH).

During the last year, 15 CIT academies were conducted, and 350 individuals from 73 different agencies became certified. This raised the state totals to 1,673 sworn CIT Officers among 108 law enforcement agencies. The total for CIT training among non-sworn members of the law enforcement team rose to 213. Continuing education opportunities and trainings, including annual trainings in Salt Lake City and St. George during December 2012, allowed 563 CIT Officers to maintain certifications. Currently, 10 of Utah's 13 DSAMH regions participate in the CIT Utah Program and conduct CIT Academies. The state of Utah has given a total of 159 CIT academies to date. By the end of 2014, that number will be 162. This year alone CIT Utah has given 18 academies.

Utah's CIT academy also has a track for corrections. The same basic information is taught, but the scenario-based training is based off of real-life situations that have occurred in the jail or prison environment. Up to 40 people attend each corrections academy. To date, 25 corrections academies have been held, and 650 sworn and non-sworn personnel have been trained. CIT academies for correction officers are provided through CIT Utah's partnership with the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office, the Utah Department of Corrections, and the Salt Lake City Police Department.

CIT training has meant fewer mentally ill people are admitted to jail. Instead, a significant number have been connected with community mental health treatment. Within Utah jails, detention officers are

applying their training while working in intake, in special housing, and with inmates in the general population.

CIT is recognized as a valuable and efficient statewide model. In 2012, the Utah State Legislature provided on-going funding for the program. The Salt Lake City Police Department, as the administrating agency for the CIT Utah program, continues to be one of six national learning sites for specialized police response. The Council of State Governments will provide support for law enforcement agencies throughout the nation to receive counsel and training from CIT Utah. In an attempt to strengthen national support of CIT programs, CIT Utah continues to be represented by a member of its administration as a Director of CIT International. CIT Utah raises awareness, increases understanding, and averts tragedies.

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Utah's CIT program was a resource in the development of the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance study, *Statewide Law Enforcement/Mental Health Efforts: Strategies to Support and Sustain Local Initiatives*, Council of State Governments Justice Center, December 2012, online at https://www.bja.gov/Publications/CSG_StatewideLEMH.pdf.

Document available at:

http://community.nicic.gov/blogs/national_jail_exchange/archive/2014/09/12/utah-s-mental-health-crisis-intervention-training-is-national-model-for-patrol-and-detention.aspx

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