

# DUTIFUL MINDS

## Information for Ohio's CIT Graduates

### It's all about partnerships

Education & Advocacy

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#### Crisis Intervention Teams – blog by Jeff Shannon, MFT

Remember when you were interviewed for your police job and they asked, “Why do you want be a police officer?” Somewhere in your response you probably said something about wanting to help people. That’s what you’re supposed to say, right? Police work is one of the helping professions. Unfortunately, we don’t usually see the fruit of our helping actions. Sometimes we do, but not often. Patrol officers arrest the same people, frequently for the same thing over and over again. Most officers rather quickly become somewhat jaded.

In the broadest sense, though, every time we treat people with respect we “help” them. And, yes, we do arrest burglars, car thieves and rapists. Clearly we help the community with every good arrest. Enter the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). It is becoming quite popular, both in the U.S. and Canada. I just got back from the International CIT Conference in San Antonio Texas, and I came back with a crazy feeling that I can actually help people and see the fruit of that help.

What is CIT?

CIT consists of police officers taking the lead in fixing a big crap sandwich: the mental health system, specifically the criminalization of the mentally ill. Here is what we know:

Nationally our jails are overflowing with mentally ill people, the vast majority of which have committed relatively minor offenses. The fiscal impact this has on state and local governments is obscene. The cost in moral currency is greater. Through no fault of their own a lot of cops are killing mentally ill persons as a result of (a) the psychotic behavior of the individual and (b) the lack of training on the part of the officers about how to manage psychotic behavior. A lot more cops are getting injured as a result of this lack of training. Mental health consumers also get lumped up a lot.

CIT involves police departments partnering with community mental health and advocacy groups to ensure services for those experiencing a psychiatric crisis can get treatment. CIT officers get 40 hours of specialized training in de-escalation techniques, signs and symptoms of mental illness, local resources, and the stigma attached to mental illness and scenario training. The end result is that CIT officers actually get that crazy guy HELP instead of arresting him. Now that would feel kind of good I would imagine!

At 2am you get a call involving a mentally disturbed subject walking in traffic. When you hear the dispatch you already know its Ol’ Joe. You get there; sure enough Ol’ Joe’s still out of his friggin mind. His pants are soiled, he’s talking about being followed by the CIA, you get the idea. Now, you have a choice: You could transport Joe to the local mental health clinic and wait 2 hours for him to be admitted, OR you could take him to jail on his \$200 warrant for peeing in public. If you’re like me, Ol’ Joe’s going to jail. And, while that solves the problem – which is our raison d’être – it doesn’t bare much of the “helper” fruit.

CIT officers have systems in place whereby there is “no wrong door.” That means the department works out an understanding with the psych ward that they’re not going to make us wait. They open the door, take Joe, TREAT HIM, and then hook him up with other TREATMENT facilities for aftercare. That way Joe gets help and doesn’t go back to jail.

The conference was inspiring. I saw a whole bunch of cops there who really had their heads and hearts in the right place. They reminded me of myself about 15 years ago. Before I became a cop I worked for 8 years in a large county jail as a mental health

professional. I tried my hardest to help thousands of Joes. But they kept coming back to jail. I got pretty burnt out and cynical...and that was BEFORE I became a cop. The difference between me back then and these CIT cops now (young and old) was that they actually are helping people.

Those with mental illness can recover, and we can be part of that.

That's pretty cool.

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**The Annual CIT Advanced Training Conference - September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010  
The Columbus Police Department Training Academy**

Keynote Address: Dr. Xavier Amador (Author and world renowned Psychologist)  
Working with Juveniles – Judge Linda Teodosio (Summit County Juvenile Court)

Workshop One: Working with Special Populations

Workshop Two: Excited Delirium (Dr. Mary Jo McMullen)

To register email Betsy Johnson NAMI Ohio: [betsy@amiohio.org](mailto:betsy@amiohio.org)

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**DVD Available “The Ohio CIT Initiative”**

After years of wishing, and months of hard work, there is now a 14 minute video presentation on Ohio’s efforts around CIT. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ/CCOE) in cooperation with The Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine & Pharmacy, The Ohio Department of Mental Health, & NAMI Ohio have produced it in DVD format and is offering it free of charge to interested parties. The goal of this project was to show how far CIT has spread throughout Ohio and tout its success!

It is hoped that “The Ohio CIT Initiative” will be shown at the beginning of all CIT courses to the attendees as a means of introducing them to why they were selected to be in this voluntary class and what is expected of them as future CIT officers. The DVD also explains to administrators the importance of having a CIT PROGRAM and not just looking at it as “Just Training”.

Contact Natalie Bonfine at the CJ/CCOE for this DVD: [nbonfine@neuocom.edu](mailto:nbonfine@neuocom.edu)

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**CORE OUTCOMES OF CIT**

1. Lower incidents of injury to officers and others
  2. Fewer repeat calls for service of patrol officers with mental health consumers
  3. Enhanced working relationship of patrol officers with county crisis workers
  4. Increased involvement of family and friends of the consumer as a crisis response alternative
  5. Increased knowledge of community resources available to the consumer and family members
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The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ/CCOE) is available to help you with your CIT Program through consultations, seminars, support, etc. at no cost to you. Contact them at:

<http://cjccoe.neuocom.edu>

Send newsworthy articles, pictures, etc. to [michael.s.woody@earthlink.net](mailto:michael.s.woody@earthlink.net)