

Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

The Crisis Intervention Team

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a community partnership that addresses the needs of mental health consumers who enter the judicial system. The primary goals of CIT are to reduce injuries to officers and mental health consumers during contacts, and to appropriately redirect mental health consumers from the judicial system to the services and support needed to stabilize consumers and reduce contact with police. A component of CIT is a training academy where officers learn to safely handle mental health consumers in crisis.

The acronym “CIT” is often used interchangeably to represent “Crisis Intervention Team” and “crisis intervention training.” For the purposes of these webpages, the acronym “CIT” is intended to represent “Crisis Intervention Team” only. All other training that addresses the topic of mental health will be referred to as “mental health training.”

What is a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)?

If you are having a mental health crisis, call 911 and speak to your local law enforcement personnel. California POST does not have a Crisis Intervention Team.

A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a self-initiated community partnership between local law enforcement, county health services, mental health advocates, and mental health consumers. It is designed to address the needs of mental health consumers who enter the judicial system during a crisis state. Each CIT is unique, developed in response to the challenges and resources of the community it serves.

Why is there a need for CITs?

Treatment services and specialized housing for individuals with mental illness has decreased over the years, creating a rising demand on law enforcement to help mental health consumers in crisis. According to the [Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System: A Review of Global Perspectives and Promising Practices](#) (pdf), to further complicate the rising demand, law enforcement interactions with mental health consumers can:

- Take more time than other calls for service.
- Require officers to have special training and skills.
- Depend on the availability of community mental health resources for successful outcomes.
- Have repeated contact with the same individuals who have unresolved mental health needs.
- Involve a person with mental illness committing a minor or “nuisance” offense.

- Become a volatile situation, risking the safety of all involved.

The CIT is an innovative concept that has helped law enforcement and their communities address these challenges with positive outcomes.

What are the goals of a CIT?

The primary goals of a CIT are to:

- Improve officer and mental health consumer safety while reducing injuries to officers and consumers during law enforcement contacts.
- Redirect mental health consumers from the judicial system to the services and support needed to stabilize their condition and reduce future contacts with law enforcement.

How did CIT get started?

Memphis, Tennessee In 1987, Joseph Robinson, a young man who struggled with mental illness, died as a result of a violent encounter with the Memphis Police Department. His death became the triggering incident for a unique collaboration between the police, the community, mental health advocates, and mental health services. The common goal was to create a system of ongoing support that gave law enforcement the training and resources needed to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes when dealing with mental health consumers in crisis. What evolved from the collaboration was the nation's first Crisis Intervention Team program, now known as the [Memphis Model](#). Since its initial launch in 1988, the Memphis Model has inspired [CIT programs nationwide](#). San Jose, California According to Sharon Roth, a long-time volunteer for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), and family member of a mental health consumer, the first CIT program to be introduced to the State of California was in 1998. Lt. Brenda Herbert of the San Jose Police Department (SJPd) reached out to Major Sam Cochrane of the Memphis Police Department and NAMI volunteer Sharon Roth to help her bring a CIT program to SJPd. With positive support from San Jose Police Chief William Lansdowne, the SJPd CIT program was successfully established and continues to thrive. Today, there are 19 individual CA POST-certified CIT courses designed in California. Many of these courses serve multiple agencies within a community, and are offered several times a year.

What does CIT training consist of?

A key component of the CIT program is a training course (referred to as a CIT academy) that is generally 32-40 consecutive hours. The course is created and delivered as a collaborative effort between local law enforcement and partners. The overarching goal of a CIT training course is to provide law enforcement officers with the cognition, information, resources, and skills that allow effective problem-solving and promote positive outcomes when responding to incidents involving mental health consumers. This goal is achieved when officers exhibit:

- Enhanced knowledge of mental health-related topics
- Understanding of the laws protecting people with disabilities
- Improved de-escalation and crisis resolution skills

- Provision of referrals, resources, information, and follow up for consumers and their families
- Reduced stigma and assumptions
- Cultural sensitivity and recognition

Visit the [CIT Center's National Curriculum webpage](#) for an example of an expanded course outline.