

Crisis Intervention Team or CIT

Purpose:

CIT is established to better serve this community and, specifically, emotionally disturbed persons in crisis. The purpose will be attained through increased training of CIT members and a partnership with local health care professionals and advocacy/support groups.

Mission Statement:

The mission of a CIT is to use understanding and skills gained through specific training to identify and provide the most effective and compassionate response possible to police situations involving people in a mental health crisis

Training Objectives:

1. To increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues and particularly better understand the perspective of mental health consumers and their family members.
2. To develop and enhance the participants' skills in interviewing and communicating with mentally ill persons
3. To increase the participants' knowledge of the most common mental illnesses, the behaviour of those suffering from these illnesses and the most appropriate ways to approach and deal with these individuals
4. To increase the knowledge of community resources to assist the mentally ill in the community, their family members and the officers dealing with them.
5. To develop knowledge and skills in de-escalating potentially volatile situations

Hamilton Crisis Intervention Team

History of the Proposal:

- 2004 COAST/HPS co-hosted the 3rd Canadian Association Chief's of Police - Police and Mental Health Liaison Conference
- Key speakers from Memphis presented on CIT - developed in 1988 and effectively used in 100+ US cities
- Group from COAST/HPS developed a proposal that integrates CIT with COAST
- July 2005 received funding from Ministry of Health Long-term Care for CIT training for Hamilton and the surrounding region

How do CITs work?

- Front-line officers attend a 40-hour training session
- Police dispatchers will assign EDP calls to CIT- trained officers
- Uniformed officers may call the CIT officer to assist with EDP calls
- CIT officers will perform regular patrol duties when not on an EDP call
- CIT officers are recognized by the community by a special CIT pin worn on the uniform

Why do we need CIT if we have COAST?

- CIT officers can attend the calls that COAST cannot attend e.g. barricade, known-weapons, rapid response, between 01:00 and 08:00 hours when COAST is only available by phone
- In 2004, 944 EDPs were taken to hospital – COAST took 24% (203) and uniformed officers took the remaining 76% (741) - CIT officers will be able to provide a more therapeutic interaction for this large number of EDPs uniformed officers continue to work with
- COAST is one unit responding to the entire city of Hamilton
- CIT officers will likely utilize COAST to assist in calls as needed
- CIT officers will act as COAST relief officers

Training

- Provides skills, tools and tactics for officers to safely de-escalate a person in a mental health crisis
- Instructed and supervised by mental health service providers, family advocates and consumer/survivors of mental illness

Topics to include:

- Recognizing mental illness and medication
- Treatment modalities, suicide prevention

- Community resources
- Mental health and the law
- Crisis de-escalation techniques, therapeutic intervention skills
- Hallucinations Experiential Workshop
- Role of substance abuse in mental illness
- Orientation to Psychiatric Emergency Services

Training Program

- 40 hour (4 10-hour sessions)
- Sarah Burtenshaw, COAST Mental Health Worker, and PC Brad Clark will provide the training – consumers, family members and community agencies will assist with the training
- 12 HPS officers to attend each session – minimum of 2 sessions in Hamilton per year = 24 officers trained per year
- Annual Review Workshop for all CIT officers

Benefits of CIT for the Hamilton Police Service

- Reduced injuries and use of force (supported by empirical evidence)
- Specially trained officers to respond immediately to mental health calls
- Officers willing to take a leadership role when dealing with mentally ill clients
- Officer recognition and appreciation by the community will increase
- Ongoing training of CIT officers at minimal expense
- Cost savings

Evaluation

- Pre- and post-test at training session to evaluate changes in knowledge, skill and attitudes
- “EDP to Hospital Form” review to determine impact of CIT on service
Note: 2004 EDP Form Review has been completed
- Surveys distributed to officers on their opinions on mental health issues before training, 6-months and one year post-training to determine what impact there has been on police service
- Evaluation of community response – satisfaction of the CIT interventions

Expected Outcomes

- CIT officers will have knowledge, skills and expertise in responding appropriately to mental health crisis calls
- CIT will coordinate with COAST in providing excellent crisis services for the mentally ill