

Attachment D: LESSONS LEARNED

“A fool learns from experience. A wise man learns from the experience of others.”

- Otto Von Bismarck

Introduction:

This document sets forth the collective wisdom and advice from representatives of fifteen established CIT programs in North Carolina, and from two CIT programs associated with the Coordinating Center of Excellence in Ohio.^{1 2} We believe that these “lessons learned” can benefit others interested in developing CIT partnerships and programs in North Carolina.

Gaining Support for Your CIT program:

From Law Enforcement:

To succeed, CIT programs must be endorsed by the agency’s top law enforcement executive - the police chief or the sheriff. Here are some suggestions for getting your police chief or sheriff to endorse CIT:

1. *Demonstrate a commitment to fully implement the CIT model.* Do whatever you can to provide a rapid turnaround for law enforcement at a crisis unit or emergency room.
2. *Demonstrate the value of CIT training to officers.* You can most easily accomplish this by having your chief or sheriff send one or more trusted officers through a CIT training program. After going through CIT training, these officers typically understand and appreciate the value of CIT, and help promote it within their agency, including to the chief or sheriff.
3. *Appeal to law enforcement concerns about legal liability.* You might want to refer the chief or sheriff to the United States Supreme Court Case, *Canton vs. Harris*, where the term “deliberate indifference” was first used. In *Canton vs. Harris*, the Supreme Court stated that the city of Canton, Ohio was negligent because it failed to teach police officers First Aid. The Supreme Court said that it is so likely that officers will need emergency medical skills that not teaching them First Aid is negligent. The same legal reasoning could apply to agencies that don’t provide CIT training, given the frequency with which law enforcement officers intervene with persons with mental illness.
4. *Appeal to their concerns about meeting accreditation standards.* Remind them that CIT can help their law enforcement agency meet CALEA³ accreditation standards on interacting with persons having mental illness (standard 41.2.7).

¹ Lilley, P. (2006). *Lessons learned in implementing CIT training in Hancock County* at: http://www.neoucom.edu/CJCCOE/Hancock_County_Lessons_Learned_08.2006.pdf

² Woody, M. (2006). *CIT toolkit – everything you need to know to start CIT in your community.* <http://www.neoucom.edu/CJCCOE/support/cittoolkit.pdf>

³ Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.

5. Address concerns about staffing. Law enforcement executives may state that they don't have sufficient staff to fill-in while an officer is in training for a week. Suggest they consider using the same procedure they implement when officers go on vacation.
6. Find and recruit a "CIT champion." Cultivate an advocate for CIT within each law enforcement agency. In most large agencies this advocate is likely to be a training officer or another "middle-management" officer who appreciates the need to change their response to mental disturbance calls. This officer can also mentor and advise the planning committee on law enforcement culture.
7. Use your influence. The mental health community should be willing to use whatever leverage it can to influence the chief or sheriff to accept CIT. Board members, NAMI leaders and/or other advocates may use their influence to convince a mayor, city or county council member, prosecutor, chief or sheriff that CIT is worth adopting. Once the chief or sheriff sees the effectiveness of CIT, resistance will disappear.

From Mental Health:

Resistance to CIT is sometimes encountered from a local managing entity (LME) or other mental health agency when they believe that:

- They will be asked to see an increasing number of "consumer criminals," or
- They will be asked to turn their crisis facilities into jails, or
- They will be unable to afford CIT.

1. Educate the LME staff and management about CIT. Learning about CIT will help address most of the LME's concerns. Help alleviate their anxieties about CIT by putting them in contact with other LME or mental health providers with successful CIT programs. They will learn that CIT consumers are no different than the consumers they already serve, and that CIT training is very affordable.
2. Address their concerns about their ability to fully implement the CIT model. LMEs may be resistant to adopt CIT because they lack a crisis service infrastructure to support full implementation of CIT, or the funds to develop one. Although developing a crisis infrastructure to support CIT should remain an important goal, remind them of the many benefits that accrue to CIT training alone. Help them find creative ways to make CIT work within the bounds of their available resources. Also, remind them of the added political clout they will have when advocating together with law enforcement to improve their crisis system.
3. Use your influence. If the mental health system is reluctant to embrace CIT, family members and consumers may persuade them. Each LME has a Consumer / Family Advisory Committee (C/FAC), and C/FAC members may influence the LME to consider CIT. Also, NAMI-NC and other advocacy organizations may convince the LME to develop CIT. Family members having first hand experience with mentally ill relatives and law enforcement are aware of the need for CIT, as are consumers who have encountered law enforcement during the course of their mental illness. These families and consumers may share their personal experiences to convince others of the need for CIT.

From the Community:

1. Get the media involved with CIT. Have them cover the program, invite them to the graduation ceremony, and have them do a follow-up story 60 days after training on how officers have used their skills. Positive publicity generated about CIT can help make your community aware of and supportive of CIT. It can also help provide positive publicity for your law enforcement agencies, and will reward your sheriff and police chief for their willingness to participate in a CIT program.
2. Invite community leaders to CIT events: Community leaders are more likely to support CIT if they are familiar with it. Inviting them to CIT graduation ceremonies or CIT award banquets may help them better understand CIT and feel invested in the success of your CIT program.

Selecting CIT officers:

1. Make CIT voluntary, not mandatory. While all officers should be informed about CIT, officers shouldn't be required to go through CIT training. Officers that are ordered to go through CIT training may resent it, resist the training, and may lack commitment to being a CIT officer.
2. Develop a recruitment process for CIT officers. Some agencies have held brief training sessions designed to familiarize all of their officers with CIT before recruiting for the CIT program. Other agencies interview prospective CIT officers, while a few agencies have the officer's apply in writing indicating why they believe they should be a CIT officer. Regardless of what process you use to select CIT officers, choose your CIT officers wisely. You want experienced street-level officers (and their immediate supervisors) who want to help persons with mental illness, and who already possess good interpersonal skills that CIT training can enhance.
3. Do not try to make all of your officers CIT certified. Some police chiefs and sheriffs want their entire force to be CIT certified. Resist this notion. Unless your agency is very small, you should not try to provide CIT training for all of your officers. Not all officers have the ability to be a good CIT officer, and as one police executive stated, "Special people deserve special officers."
4. Make sure that your CIT trained officers respond to CIT calls. All the officers you select to go through CIT training should be willing to respond to CIT calls. CIT training represents a considerable investment of your agency's time and resources, and you want to make sure that the prospective CIT officer will use their CIT training. The forty hour CIT course is just the beginning of the training process – it does not make an officer an expert on helping people with mental illness. Officers need to use their CIT skills so they won't lose these skills, and the experience of handling multiple CIT calls over time can help turn in a novice CIT officer into an expert CIT officer.
5. Consider cross training ERT and CNT officers in CIT: Many of the skills taught in Emergency Response Team (ERT), Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT), and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings are complementary, and cross training ERT, CNT, and CIT officers will benefit them in all three roles.

CIT Training Class

1. Select an adequate CIT training facility: Find a place to hold the training that is large enough for the class, has good access to AV equipment, and has break-out rooms for role plays. Most CIT programs find that the facilities of their local community college meet these needs. Law enforcement training in North Carolina is often performed through the community college system, and offering CIT training at a local community college under the auspices of its law enforcement training program helps legitimize CIT training in the eyes of the law enforcement officers.
2. Construct a CIT training manual: Get copies of other CIT training manuals and handouts before you design your own to get a feel for how other trainings were organized, and to borrow or build upon materials for your CIT training. Make sure the CIT manual provides handouts and summary information that officers can take with them that reinforces the training objectives (e.g., suicide lethality assessment, medications, mental illness symptomatology, de-escalation skills).
3. Offer CIT tools and products: Create or provide products on various topics that officers can carry in their pocket, wallet, or patrol car. These may include psychiatric drug reference sheets, pocket-sized CIT interaction guidelines, or referral cards with phone numbers and addresses.
4. Introduce CIT to your officers by another officer: Consider inviting a trained CIT officer from an established CIT program to your first training to present on the impact that CIT has had with respect to officer safety, civilian safety, and jail diversions, to help the officers see the value of the CIT training.
5. Select and groom your faculty: Consider holding a brief “train the officers” training event for instructors of your first CIT class. This event may be a luncheon with the dual purpose of expressing thanks to the volunteer instructors who’ll be teaching your CIT class, and teaching them about training law enforcement officers. The CIT instructors need to be “police friendly”. Essentially this means straight talking, without excessive jargon. The instruction on how to teach to law enforcement might be delivered by a training officer involved with your local CIT program, and can help guide your instructors to develop presentations that are at a level appropriate for law enforcement, and to deliver them in a way that holds the interest of a law enforcement audience.
6. Encourage your instructors to “ride along” with law enforcement: Most law enforcement agencies offer concerned citizens the opportunity to ride along with officers while they perform their duties. The instructors should be encouraged to go on a ride-along with the local law enforcement officer before participating in the CIT training. This helps the instructor better understand the nature of police work and conveys to the police the level of commitment of the trainer.
7. Evaluate your instructors: CIT instructors should be evaluated by the CIT officers, and the results of these student evaluations should be examined to help determine which instructors to invite back, which to replace, and what changes to make in the training or curriculum. CIT instructors should be provided with the results of these evaluations so that they may know how to improve their training.

8. Keep your class size manageable: CIT classes that have thirty (30) or more officer / trainees require a larger facility, tend to be more impersonal, have less time available for role playing practice per officer, and make site visits more cumbersome and less rewarding. Conversely, CIT classes that are too small (12 officers or less) may not have enough students to be able to be supported by the Community College, and may not make efficient use of your training resources and instructors. Most successful CIT training programs have class sizes that range between 15 and 28 students.
9. Agree on roles for consumers, family members, and visitors involved in training: The primary purpose of CIT training is to train law enforcement officers. Visitors to CIT training should make sure their involvement in CIT training promotes this goal and doesn't detract from it. Officers need to be able to ask questions and practice CIT skills in an environment that is comfortable and allows them to take risks. Being observed or judged by civilians while trying out these skills can be uncomfortable for officers, and comments from visitors that reflect a lack of understanding of law enforcement's role or culture may lead them to question the legitimacy and professionalism of the CIT training.

The CIT Pin

Most CIT programs in North Carolina have adopted a standard design for a CIT pin that officers wear on their uniforms to identify themselves as CIT officers. The design for this pin is shown below. The advantage of using this design is that consumers and others from other areas where CIT exists will look for and recognize this CIT pin, and will know that the officer wearing it is CIT trained. You may contact Bob Kurtz at Bob.Kurtz@ncmail.net or 919 / 715-2771 for information on ordering this CIT pin. Regardless of what design you order for your CIT pin, we strongly suggest that it has two prongs on the back to affix it to the uniform and prevent it from rotating when worn.



Sustaining Your CIT Program

CIT programs need constant monitoring. You cannot start-up a CIT program and expect it to run smoothly on its own. The following are some suggestions for sustaining and improving your CIT program.

1. *Identify and address problems early:* CIT officers often identify holes or gaps in the system that will need attention. It is critical that the mental health system address these gaps as best it can to maintain its credibility with the CIT officers. Copies of CIT encounter forms should be provided to the mental health coordinator monthly - and on an immediate basis, if a major problem is identified. The mental health coordinator and others should then follow through, as appropriate, to address these areas of concern.
2. *Consider convening joint clinical / law enforcement meetings and consultation:* Meetings between mental health professionals and law enforcement officers can help address concerns about consumers whom the CIT officers repeatedly encounter. CIT officers will appreciate having mental health expertise and resources available to help solve these problems, and mental health professionals and law enforcement officers can develop problem solving strategies together that neither would be able to develop alone. Making mental health staff available to CIT officers for phone consultation can further support the CIT officer's efforts and strengthen mental health / law enforcement partnerships.
3. *Encourage the continuing education of CIT officers:* Provide support for CIT certified officers to attend national and state CIT conferences or other training experiences where they can receive continuing education on CIT related topics. Be sure to ask their input as to what type of further training they would like.
4. *Demonstrate your appreciation of your CIT officers:* If CIT officers sense that they have been forgotten, they will lose the incentive to "keep up the good work." Consider annual award banquets or ceremonies to honor and express appreciation for your CIT officers. Provide articles and information about CIT to the CIT officers on a regular basis. Make them a part of the selection process for future CIT hopefuls. In short, keep them involved, make them feel appreciated, and help them to feel ownership of the CIT program.
5. *Keep a CIT scrap book.* From the very beginning, you should consider keeping a scrap book of your CIT program. This scrap book could include any newspaper articles about CIT, letters praising CIT, and photos of the different CIT graduating classes. You can show this scrap book at CIT events and at any other opportunities to present about CIT. It can help your old CIT officers feel appreciated, help your new CIT officers feel connected to the CIT program, and can help remind everyone involved of how far your CIT partnership has come.

We firmly believe that heeding these suggestions will help you to develop and sustain an effective and successful CIT program. If you wish any further information on any of the topics contained in this document, or wish any further technical assistance or information about CIT in North Carolina, please contact Robert Kurtz, Ph.D., at 919 / 715-2771 or via email at Bob.Kurtz@ncmail.net.