

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY



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Sheriff

## Crisis Intervention Team

|                          |                                 |                  |                               |
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| <b>Distribution:</b>     | <b>All Personnel</b>            | <b>Index:</b>    | <b>OPS 0702</b>               |
| <b>Responsible Unit:</b> | <b>Police Operations Bureau</b> | <b>Rescinds:</b> | <b>MAN6100 dated 10/15/13</b> |
|                          |                                 | <b>MD Code:</b>  |                               |

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|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Issued:</b> | <b>04/23/22</b> | <b>Reviewed</b> | <b>04/23/22</b> | <b>Next Review:</b> | <b>04/23/25</b> |
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### 1. Purpose

To establish operational guidelines for the use of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

### 2. Policy

To enhance safety and quality of life in the community, the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) recognizes the need to bring community resources together to target behavioral health issues. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), law enforcement agencies have partnered with mental health **providers** to develop more compassionate approaches that emphasize community-based treatment instead of arrest and incarceration **of persons with behavioral health issues**. The primary goal of the CIT program is to have law enforcement, correctional, and civilian employees with specialized training available to assist individuals in crisis. The primary method is to identify the needs of the individual in crisis and make appropriate referrals **immediately**. CIT intervention should be considered as an alternative to arresting the individual (assuming law or policy does not mandate an arrest). This policy was developed in collaboration with **qualified** mental health professionals.

### 3. Definitions

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS:** a range of conditions, each with its own specific characteristics; including but not limited to:

- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar disorder
- Major depression
- **Substance Use disorders**
- Schizoaffective disorder
- Personality disorders
- Anxiety **disorders**

**CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM (CIT):** a team consisting of law enforcement deputies, correctional deputies, **allied police officers and civilian professionals** who have received specialized **40-hour CIT training**.

**CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM COORDINATOR:** a law enforcement, correctional, **or civilian professional**, designated by the Division or Precinct Commander, who is responsible for all operations related to the Crisis Intervention Team within that Commander's span of control.

#### 4. References

*Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs: A Best Practice Guide for Transforming Community Responses to Mental Health Crises. (2019). CIT International.*

*Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: Strategies for Effective Law Enforcement Training. (2008). Bureau of Justice Assistance.*

*Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: Tailoring Law Enforcement Initiatives to Individual Jurisdictions. (2010). Bureau of Justice Assistance.*

*Building Safer Communities: Improving Police Response to Persons with Mental Illness. (2010). International Association of Chiefs of Police National Policy Summit.*

#### 5. Procedures

##### A. Crisis Intervention Training

1. The specialized 40-hour CIT course of instruction for law enforcement, corrections deputies and 911 operators. This course is developed and maintained by the CIT International organization, which serves as the standard for many public safety agencies.
2. The training curriculum should be reviewed and updated every 3 years.

##### B. First Responding Deputy will:

1. Secure the scene making it safe for the individual in crisis and other individuals on the scene;
2. When appropriate, handle the individual through the Emergency Petition process;
3. Determine if the circumstance requires CIT intervention and/or Mobile Crisis Team response; and
4. Prepare to brief the CIT member by gathering all available information.
5. Information sources should include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Observations of the person's actions and demeanor;
  - b. Interviews conducted on the scene with family and friends of the individual; and
  - c. Making careful note of any medical conditions, mobility issues, medications or medical equipment involved. These are important indicators in assessing the situation fully.

##### C. CIT Deputy/Supervisor

1. The CIT deputy will assume the lead role interacting with the individual.
2. The CIT deputy will attempt to resolve the incident using approved verbal de-escalation techniques and methods.

3. To ensure the least confrontational approach, the CIT deputy will engage the person in crisis by speaking calmly, slowly, showing compassion and empathy.
4. The person in crisis will be referred to community support programs when appropriate. A high priority will be given to utilize the 1-800-NEXTSTEP crisis hotline, Mobile Crisis Team and resources which may include the walk-in crisis center. All such resources are accessible through the 24/7 hotline.
5. Given the volatility of situations involving an individual in crisis, deputies will continually evaluate the safety of the situation on scene.

#### D. CIT in the Detention Center

1. CIT trained correctional deputies and support staff may be utilized in the following manner:
  - a. Detection and identification of inmates who display unusual or bizarre behavior at intake;
  - b. Detection and identification of inmates who display unusual or bizarre behavior during the initial classification interview; and
  - c. Detection and identification of inmates who display unusual or bizarre behavior in the housing areas such that they may need mental health services.

#### E. CIT Coordinator

1. The CIT Coordinator will be responsible for the following:
  - a. Collecting data of CIT activations;
  - b. Ensuring CIT training remains current and relevant;
  - c. Acting as HCSO liaison to allied partners in the behavioral health system;
  - d. Maintaining an accurate roster of CIT members; and
  - e. Overseeing the development of a selection process for CIT members.

#### F. CIT Member

1. The selection of new members ensures growth and development of the team.
2. The CIT coordinator will oversee the selection process of new members.
3. Upon selection, successful completion of the 40-hour CIT course is mandatory.
4. Selection criteria may consist of, but is not limited to:
  - a. Current assignment (with priority for patrol personnel);
  - b. Verbal de-escalation skills;

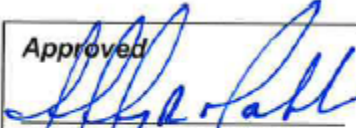
- c. Disciplinary history review;
  - d. Performance Appraisal Rating;
  - e. Supervisory recommendations; and
  - f. Time in grade.
5. Upon successful completion of the CIT course, the member may wear the "CIT" pin as prescribed by Agency policy.

G. CIT Training

- 1. All entry level recruits, and lateral hires will receive the 8-hour Mental Health First Aid training for Public Safety.
- 2. The Mental Health First Aid training will be a prerequisite for the CIT training program.
- 3. All training records will be maintained by the Training Academy.
- 4. The training curriculum will be reviewed and updated every 3 years.

H. Documentation

- 1. CIT members will complete a CIT report (SO-136) to document their actions.
- 2. Email a copy of the report to the CIT Coordinator.

Approved  
  
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SHERIFF  
DATE 4.23.22