

WEEKLY POLICY SUMMARY:

Law Enforcement Community Support for Mental Health Challenges

April 12, 2019

Praise For Law Enforcement's Handling Of Mental Health Challenges

1. [WHNT 19](#): Huntsville, Alabama Police officers on the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) are training other officers about the program, which Sergeant Grady Thigpen says helps, "Officers ... recognize certain illnesses that people may be exhibiting on calls. It allows them a technique to deescalate the situations that can get the folks help they may need." Mental health is an issue the Huntsville Police Department is continually dealing with, and better training could help the community too. Huntsville Police say the goal of the CIT is to foster a safer and more effective response and, eventually, to start training other law enforcement agencies around the state to use the program.
 - o A [Crisis Intervention Team \(CIT\) program](#) is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes encounters between law enforcement and someone suffering a mental health crisis. The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers information and resources on CIT programs to local law enforcement, mental health providers and other community leaders, and notes there are currently CIT programs in more than 2,700 communities nationwide. Research shows CIT is associated with improved officer attitudes and knowledge about mental illness. In Memphis, Tennessee for example, CIT resulted in an 80% reduction of officer injuries during mental health crisis calls.
 - o [Video About CIT](#)
2. [The Herald](#): Officers from Mercer County, Ohio received Crisis Intervention Team training on dealing with persons suffering from mental health issues. Patrolman Jason Bennett said the weeklong training, available to law enforcement and emergency responders, was beneficial, providing more knowledge and perspective on mental illness. The training is designed to reduce recidivism and direct people with mental health issues away from prison to needed medical help. Officer Brian Clark of Mercer County Juvenile Probation said the training also teaches patience and empathy for those with suffering from mental health issues. Mercer County Commissioner Scott Boyd said the training is, "bound to make a difference."



Graduates of the Mercer County, Ohio Crisis Intervention Training receiving certificates of completion.

3. [KSL](#): Mental health advocates in Salt Lake City, Utah gathered to share their experiences interacting with police officers and encourage the use of best practices taught in Crisis Intervention Team training. Salt Lake police detective Michael Ruff said the department trains all its new officers in crisis intervention with a weeklong course, most of which is taught by social workers and mental health specialists, at the police academy. "We believe in the training and it's been something that has been implemented throughout our officers," Ruff said. He said the training gives tools for officers to help people, whether they are working with mentally ill citizens or not. The advocates also shared positive experiences, showing the difference in response when officers are trained in CIT.
 4. [Major County Sheriffs of America](#): The Pima County, Arizona Sheriff's Department created the Therapy Canine Program, which encompasses the Crisis Canine Response Team (CCRT), the Corrections Pet Assisted Stress Therapy (CPAST) Canine Program, and the School Resource Officer Canine Team (SROCT) in order to better address mental health challenges in Pima County. The CCRT unit aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and uses canines to respond to public crisis calls, works with community hospitals, and conducts mental health welfare checks. The CPAST unit uses canines to assist inmates in times of crisis and has proven to reduce stress among inmate populations which leads to reduction of suicides, violence, and assaults. According to the Pima County Sheriff's Department, the Therapy Canine Program has produced "unprecedented positive outcomes that have led to discussions of growth and outreach."
- [Video of Therapy Canine Program](#).



• A poster promoting the North Country Community Mental Health Organization’s “Mental Health Month” events for May.

- [WMUK](#): “Coming Up For Air” is a film which details the impact of mental health on families. Producer Roger Rapoport said that he consulted mental health experts, but also talked to parents and students to portray mental health problems in a realistic way.

Reliance On Law Enforcement For Mental Health Needs

5. [News Channel 10](#): Potter and Randall Counties in Texas are working on a program to address a need to keep those dealing with mental health disorders and substance abuse out of jail. The counties plan to use the grant-funded program, called COPSD, which will pay for counselors to teach officers about the co-occurring psychiatric and substance abuse disorders inmates are dealing with. Potter County Sheriff Brian Thomas said about 25-percent of Potter County inmates have a mental health disorder and about 75-percent struggle with substance abuse. He said jail becomes a revolving door for those who struggle with these issues and hopes the program will help reduce those numbers.

- [Video](#)

6. [JD News](#): The Dix Crisis Intervention Center, a recently completed 16-bed facility located in Onslow County, North Carolina, will be used by agencies in Onslow, Carteret, and Craven counties for short-term treatment of mental illness and substance abuse, providing law enforcement an alternative to bringing people to area hospitals and jails. North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein said the Dix Crisis Intervention Center would mean the difference between life and death for some. In addition, the Onslow County Jail was awarded a grant to provide funding for a full-time case manager to work with detainees to help them connect with the proper resources outside the jail upon their release.
 - [Video](#) of North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein's comments at the event.
7. [Northern Kentucky Tribune](#): In Covington, Kentucky, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, state and local community and government leaders, community mental health centers, first responders and numerous service organizations from across the state met for the 2019 Kentucky Harm Reduction Summit. The group gathered to discuss current harm reduction strategies at work in the state and the work still needed on more effective harm reduction and drug policies. Cabinet for Health and Family Services Secretary Adam Meier said getting the perspective of so many different groups and individuals focused on harm reduction helps provide a more complete picture. Topics discussed at the summit included: Law Enforcement Support of Harm Reduction; Prevention and Harm Reduction; Community Planning for Harm Reduction; Harm Reduction 101; Harm Reduction Leadership; and Harm Reduction and Families in Recovery.
8. [Public Radio Tulsa](#): The Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences (OSUCHS) in Tulsa, Oklahoma was awarded a \$375,000 federal grant to provide mental health awareness training to first responders to assist them in getting more people into treatment rather than having them end up in jail. Part of the training will teach police, firefighters and paramedics to recognize and respond to mental illness and substance abuse. "What does it look like when someone's psychotic? What does it look like when someone is high on methamphetamine? How do you deal with somebody who is hearing voices or having delusional thinking?" explained OSUCHS Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Chair Dr. Jason Beaman. The training will also teach first responders de-escalation techniques and where they can refer those with mental illness for treatment. Beaman said there's a real need for police to increase their mental health awareness. First responders can be certified in mental health first aid when they complete the training.

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There is no recent activity.