



The first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) was established in 1988, in Memphis Tennessee, after the tragic shooting of a man with serious mental illness by a police officer. This tragedy, as well as countless others, has stimulated a community collaboration between law enforcement, mental health providers, family members, consumers and advocates across the country. CIT programs across the United States have achieved remarkable success due to the improved police training and procedures in response to subjects with mental illness. Because of financial shortages in community mental health services, law enforcement has become the front line responder to individuals in a psychiatric crisis. The 40-hour training program will help law enforcement recognize mental illnesses, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, teach verbal de-escalation skills and understand laws associated with mental illness. Previous research has shown CIT being most successful when the consumer is linked to appropriate treatment, reducing the number of arrests involving a subject with serious mental illness and also decreasing recidivism.

In February of 2014 the Douglas County CIT Council was created. The Chairperson is Officer Amber Rhoden (LKPD), Co-Chair is Officer Terry Haak (LKPD), Secretary is Sergeant Phillip Mathis (DGSO) and Sergeant David Hogue (LKPD) serves as an advisory position. The Council consists of 23 members from the Lawrence Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Baldwin Police Department, Eudora Police Department, Douglas County Emergency Communications, Lawrence Douglas County Fire and Medical (LDCFM), University of Kansas Public Safety Office, University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, Douglas County District Attorney's Office, Lawrence Municipal Court, The Shelter Inc., Bert Nash, Headquarters, DCCCA, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Douglas County (NAMI-DG). Within those agencies, there are 19 LKPD Officers trained, 3 BPD Officers trained and 3 DGSO Deputies trained. Members from the Council have been involved in a CIT Leadership group and the Governor's Mental Health Task Force Sub-Committee work groups that discuss issues involving mental health across the state. Douglas County CIT has met monthly to examine our local systems and to determine gaps in services in order to better serve the needs of the community. We are working to streamline the screening process in order to return law enforcement to their duties faster, as well as the lines of communication to allow the consumer better access to care. We are also looking to create a mental health diversion program at the municipal level. There are potential state statute changes in 2016 that would allow law enforcement to take an individual to a local 24-hour crisis center, and therefore reduce the number of involuntary committals and travel time to Osawatomie State Hospital. We will host our first 40-hour CIT class September 28th through October 2nd, 2015. While we have not fully implemented CIT in Douglas County, we have had several successes due to the evolving collaboration between all of the community resources.