# Thomas Jefferson Area
# Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)

Thomas Jefferson Area Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB)
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## Background of CIT

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a well-documented and successful model of improving police interactions with people experiencing acute episodes of mental illness. The training is designed to educate and prepare police officers who come into contact with people in crisis, to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and to respond effectively and appropriately to the individual. Because police officers are often the first responders in these incidents, it is essential that they understand how mental illnesses can alter people's behaviors and perceptions. The trained CIT Officer is skilled at recognizing and de-escalating crises involving people with acute episodes of mental illness, while bringing an element of understanding and compassion to these difficult situations. The goal of the CIT program is to reduce unnecessary restraint and incarceration of people with mental illness and to provide individuals with appropriate treatment in the community.

The Charlottesville CIT project began in 2005 with the support of an Initiative for Effective Nonprofits Grant from the United Way. The first 12 months were spent building consensus in the Charlottesville community to decide whether or not to bring a Crisis Intervention Team to the area. With overwhelming support within the community, we began the implementation phase of the project with a grant from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in 2006.

In the third year of the DCJS funding the overarching objectives of this program are twofold and inter-related; to be completed by June 30, 2009.

1.) Specialized training to **55%** of the patrol force (Charlottesville, Albemarle, and University of Virginia Police Departments) on how to effectively work with people exhibiting signs of acute mental illness and substance abuse will be provided during the first year of this grant. Part of the grant will also go toward expanding CIT trainings to all rural sheriff's departments within the Thomas Jefferson Area CCJB region. The objective in these seven counties is to raise CIT Trainings levels to **35%** of their patrol force. The trainings are also available to Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail, Central Virginia Regional Jail, and 911 Emergency Dispatchers.

2.) Further develop the local crisis intervention team task force, with representatives from law enforcement agencies, mental health service providers, local and regional jails, local and state community corrections programs, consumers and advocates, to design and implement a written protocol that governs the agencies' interactions in working with people experiencing acute episodes of mental illness and with people with mental illness who have found themselves in situation in which law enforcement has intervened.

## Stakeholders of CIT in the Charlottesville Community:

The taskforce overseeing this project and grant includes a diverse group of people within our community (police chiefs, judges, jail administrative staff, mental health treatment/advocates/consumers, commonwealth and defense attorneys, and medical professionals).

## The Need for CIT:

- There are 400 to 500 offenders with mental illness in Charlottesville/Albemarle area.
- 3,200 to 3,500 people in Virginia jails on any given day have a mental illness. (*Virginia Department of Correction*)
- Inmates with mental illness regularly experience recidivism rates above 70 percent. (*National Institute of Corrections*)
- Incarceration of offenders with mental illness often exacerbates the problem for two reasons. First, predatory inmates mistreat and take advantage of inmates with mental illness. Second, as with anyone who is taken advantage of, the experience is likely to cause a person with mental illness to increase symptoms, usually leading to an extended period of incarceration and added criminal charges. *Consensus Project Report*
- 1/3 of our regional state psychiatric hospital's (Western State Hospital) released forensic admissions are rearrested.