

RESOURCES *and* SUPPORT *for* FAMILIES, FRIENDS *and* OTHER ALLIES *in* MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

OHIO CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CRISES

No one has a greater stake in the outcome of a mental health crisis than the individual in crisis, followed closely by their family, friends and allies in recovery. Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) are community-based programs that bring together law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, individuals living with mental illness and their families, friends and allies to improve responses to people experiencing mental health crises.

Crisis Intervention Teams include law enforcement patrol officers (CIT officers) who specialize in communicating, assessing and resolving mental-health related crises. CIT officers serve as primary responders to mental health crises and are knowledgeable about community mental health treatment and support resources. CIT officers work with their local CIT programs to engage mental health treatment providers and other services for people in crisis.

Goals of Ohio CIT Programs

- To improve the safety of all in situations where law enforcement officers interact with individuals in crisis.
- To improve outcomes when law enforcement officers interact with individuals in crisis.
- To increase understanding of, accessibility to, and improve responsiveness by local crisis response systems.
- To divert individuals in crisis from the criminal justice system to treatment alternatives, when possible.
- To transform the local crisis response system to only use law enforcement officers as first responders when there is an immediate or imminent threat to safety or a serious criminal concern.

Although seventy-six percent of law enforcement agencies in Ohio participate in a CIT program, CIT officers are not always available to respond to mental health crises. If you call for police services and a dispatcher is unfamiliar with “CIT,” request an officer who has specialized training for mental health emergencies.

When and How to Call for Emergency Services (Police, Fire, EMS)

- Calling for police services and requesting a “CIT officer” is the most appropriate response for a mental health crisis where there is an immediate or imminent threat to safety or a serious criminal concern.
- If a medical emergency is apparent or suspected in any way, always call 911.
- It is not appropriate to call for police services and request a CIT officer before other coping skills/techniques or support resources have been attempted or because an individual has not complied with taking medication or other requested behaviors. It is also not appropriate to threaten an individual with calling the police on them (i.e., “If you don’t do X, I’m calling the police!”).

- When calling 911 in response to a mental health crisis, it is very helpful to convey if the individual:^{1,2}
 - Is in danger of hurting themselves, others or property
 - Has access to a weapon
 - Has a history of violence or aggression
 - Has a history of self-harm or suicide attempts
 - Has a mental health diagnosis, and if so, current symptoms, medications and prior hospitalizations
 - Has a history of responding positively or negatively to certain things, people, types of interventions, etc.
 - Is using substances
- During a mental health crisis, it is important for family, friends and allies to:
 - Remain as calm as possible
 - Recognize that first responders are trained to manage crises and ensure safety
 - When the first responders arrive, clarify that “This is a mental health crisis”, share any information that might be useful, and then leave the response to the professionals
 - Be prepared to possibly witness upsetting scenes, such as the person being taken into custody
 - Take care of themselves. A mental health crisis is stressful and can be upsetting for everyone involved; family members, friends and allies in recovery are encouraged to reach out to a local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) affiliate or their own support resources following a loved one’s mental health crisis
 - Update the individual’s current treatment provider(s) about the incident or hospitalization

HELPFUL RESOURCES

National Alliance on Mental Illness

[Navigating a Mental Health Crisis: A NAMI Resource Guide for Those Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis.](#)

[Calling 911 and Talking with Police](#)

REFERENCES

¹National Alliance on Mental Illness. Navigating a Mental Health Crisis. 2018. Available at: [nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis/Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis](https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis/Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis). Accessed August 20, 2020.

²National Alliance on Mental Health. Calling 911 and Talking with Police. 2019. Available at: [nami.org/find-support/family-members-and-caregivers/calling-911-and-talking-with-police](https://www.nami.org/find-support/family-members-and-caregivers/calling-911-and-talking-with-police). Accessed August 20, 2020.



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