

ANATOMY OF A CIT OFFICER

Definition:

A law enforcement officer who volunteers to go through 40 hours of highly intensive training that will enable them to deal more humanely and effectively with persons that have a mental illness, and may be in crisis.

Characteristics:

A law enforcement officer who really meant it when they told the appointing authority that The reason they wanted to become an officer was that they wanted to help people! This officer has shown maturity when dealing with people and has built up some experience on the job. The officer who volunteers to go on 3 times as many crisis calls (one fourth of the patrol division should be trained) is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. This officer will have good communications skills and be intelligent. They may be more educated than other officers, or have a family member who is mentally ill. Their heart will be in the right place. They will always be able to think tactically, realizing that these can be very difficult, challenging, and dangerous calls.

A Typical Day for the CIT Officer:

The officer is assigned to the Patrol Division of their agency. They may work any shift in the 24 hours of a day. They may have a partner, but more than likely they work alone. The Detail will show that they are "CIT". This way the Dispatcher can easily find them when the need arises.

Since they completed their 40-hours of CIT training they have been receiving approximately 3 times as many "Crisis" calls. After all, they are the experts! If they have been a CIT officer for awhile, most of the crisis calls they go on are familiar to them. They have been there before. They have probably built up some rapport with the person in crisis and their family. Things will go much more smoothly since it's not a stranger or perceived "badge heavy" cop coming to the door.

The CIT officer may take the person in crisis (after de-escalating them) to a psychiatric emergency services facility or hospital. Most likely this will be a voluntary admittance. The officer will probably sign some paperwork once there to ensure that the person in crisis does not change their mind and leave before they are evaluated.

A CIT officer in a true CIT Program will handle any and all calls that other patrol officers handle. They will however, go above and beyond and take extra calls – those involving persons in mental crisis! The officer usually will not receive extra compensation and may be called "a sucker" by some shortsighted fellow officers. This will not distract the CIT officer from doing the best job that he/she knows how to do in helping people.

The CIT officer, more than likely, will rise through the ranks faster than his/her non-CIT officers and will be life-long supporters of programs that teach those in law enforcement how to "just talk to people the way you would like to be talked to".

All officers that deal more regularly with persons in mental crisis should be trained and have ready access to less-lethal weaponry. This just makes common sense. The CIT officer will be very judicial in using these extra "tools" on their belt. This officer will go through refresher and advanced courses every year and will probably attend special functions sponsored by such groups as The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Alcohol, Drug Abuse & Mental Health Boards, and other community support agencies that want to recognize the dedication shown to the community by these giving individuals.