South Central Louisiana HUMAN SERVICES AUTHORITY — Helping People, Changing Lives

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for Law Enforcement Officers is more than just a 40-hour training. It is community collaboration between local law enforcement, behavioral health professionals and persons living with behavioral health and developmental issues, focused on improving responses to calls in recognition that these behaviors are not crimes but diseases. CIT brings all stakeholders together to highlight best practice models, improve community partnerships and develop practices that equip communities to serve people affected by behavioral health and developmental issues with dignity and respect.

Since 2013, South Central Louisiana Human Services Authority (SCLHSA), a local governing entity of the state specializing in the assessment and treatment of persons with behavioral health issues has led the training of law enforcement officers in Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, Assumption, St. James, St. Charles and St. John Parishes by collaborating with CIT trained officers from the St. Charles Sheriff's Office. In 2018, the 6th CIT 40 hour training course will be held in June and the 5th CIT 8 hour training class for dispatchers will be held in May. Since the first training, other local officers who have completed the program have joined the training team and participate in the planning and delivery of the program. The curriculum is taught by law enforcement, behavioral health and advocacy representatives and persons with lived experience in the behavioral health areas. The areas of focus in the training are:

- Understanding common signs and symptoms of behavioral health illnesses and co-occurring disorders
- Recognize when those signs and symptoms represent a crisis situation
- Safely de-escalate individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis and
- Utilize community resources and diversion strategies to provide assistance
- Identify individuals at risk and make a referral to a community resource in a preventive action.

SCLHSA's training program is offered to law enforcement officers at no cost and in collaboration with the SCLHSA Regional Advisory Committee, NAMI Terrebonne and most recently with the Terrebonne Parish District Attorney's Office. All faculty are experts in their professions and life experiences and contribute their knowledge on a voluntary basis. Each course can accommodate up to 24 officers for training and at the completion of the program each is awarded a certificate and a CIT pin which allows the officer to freely identify him/her self as a CIT trained officer, an officer who is skilled and passionate about responding to complicated calls where behavioral health issues are involved.

CIT training, often called the Memphis Model, was created in 1988 after a call resulted in an officer involved shooting and death of a person with a history of mental illness. Memphis, Tennessee law enforcement, local mental health advocates, hospital and church officials sought a better approach to working with persons with behavioral health issues in crisis and the result was CIT, the Memphis Model. CIT has grown to include 49 states and 4 countries and is regarded as a model in responding to people in crisis.

The SCLHSA CIT program believes all officers benefit from this important education and that as officers respond from this position of knowledge, the following broader benefits result:

- Positive community relationships
- Improved crisis response system
- Trained responses to behavioral health crisis calls
- Reduced unnecessary arrests or use of force
- Reduced officer/citizen injuries
- Increased officer confidence in skills
- Reduced liability
- More efficient use of criminal justice resources, including increased jail diversion
- More linkage of individuals in need to the appropriate behavioral health service

CIT training is available in several communities across Louisiana and the training offered by SCLHSA is open to any law enforcement officer.

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