

Athens County DRAFT CIT Peer Review Summary

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BACKGROUND: *The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CCOE) desires to work with CIT Coordinators across Ohio to strengthen our collective understating of the core elements and emerging best practices within CIT. One vehicle of doing just that is through a "Peer Review Process", a voluntary, collegial process built on identifying and coalescing the best elements of CIT programs.*

The Peer Review Process consists of four phases: a Self Assessment conducted by the county under review, a Desk Audit that provides detail on the program and training curriculum, a Site Visit by a team of reviewers, and a written report summarizing the reviewers observations.

The Athens County Program should be congratulated for offering to be the first CIT program to undergo the Peer Review Process. A Site visit was conducted on December 17, 2009 by the Review Team and the following CIT Planning Committee members: David Malawista (Athens PD), Steve Noftz (Ohio University PD), Leo Carsey (Ohio University PD), Terry Hayes, Tri-County Mental Health, Diane Pfaff (317 Board), Bill Reed (Community Forensic Monitor), and Cindy Boyd, SAMI Court Coordinator

This report is a synthesis of what the reviewers found after conducting the review process and is organized to highlight Strengths and Suggestions related to the training curriculum and the CIT program. Finally, while the two reviewers have learned a lot and have concrete ideas on how to improve their own CIT programs in Fairfield and Hancock counties, the ultimate test of the benefit of this Peer Review Process will be if the report and resource matching done via the CCOE helps Athens County strengthen their program. We hope it does.

INTRODUCTION: *When meeting with the Athens County Planning Committee, the reviewers thought it important to set the tone of the onsite review process by discussing the purpose and role of the Core Elements. While there is a lot of variability across CIT development (which is good for innovation), the Core elements can provide direction for communities to positively assess their CIT program. Most developing CIT programs go through common growth stages. From its inception to a committed group of people that bring an initial training to their community, to a policy driven, data rich CIT program, the core elements provide a way to guide the growth of programs. Such elements also create consensus on what CIT is NOT: A twelve hour training that does not include role play is not CIT training.*

It is when the Core elements are used to define “fidelity” concerning CIT programs, that natural tensions arise. Rural vs. urban, large vs. small departments, disparities in resources, and how well developed other Criminal Justice initiatives are within a county, like specialized courts and/or jail diversion programs, all impact the specific elements. Three common areas of tension are the length of trainings, who gets trained (voluntary or mandatory), and how the de-escalation/role play blocks of the training are taught.

The reviewers noted that their goal is not to assign where Athens county is in their program fidelity, but rather use the Core elements to focus discussions on program development. To illustrate this, the reviewers provide a handout (The CIT Pyramid) depicting the typical path that CIT program development can take (see Attachment #1). As CIT develops beyond training and into a full fledged diversion/risk reduction program, the essential elements can become more formalized with written policies, procedures, protocols, data collection, and evaluation processes that help build a solid foundation that can better position the program to weather funding and leadership cycles. It is within this program development context that the Peer Process can provide observations on the County’s program, highlight their strengths, and, through the CCOE, help to bridge the connection between the county’s needs and CIT resources that exist across the State.

CIT PROGRAM STRENGTHS

1. Program Oversight- The County’s Self-Assessment identified two program strengths, Law Enforcement leadership and the commitment of the Jails Diversion Advisory Board. The reviewers concur! Although research has not yet documented which features are most critical to a successful CIT program, arguably strong collaborative ties among law enforcement, consumers and family members, and mental health service providers creates a strong foundation. There exists strong oversight of CIT implementation by the county’s Jail Diversion Advisory Board which meets every other month and also assists with the coordination of other jail diversion programs, the SAMI court, and the NAMI one day jail training. The composition of this group is a passionate and committed group that includes representation from law enforcement, mental health, courts, and family members from Athens County.

2. CIT Coordination- David Malawista and Steve Noftz have proven to be strong CIT ambassadors from law enforcement and often help other counties implement CIT. They also provide informal support and consultation to LE agencies across the three counties as needs/issues arise. Both officers were recognized by NAMI Ohio as “Officers of the Year”. The 317 Board and Tri-County mental health have provided steady and consistent support to the CIT planning. The county’s CIT program was also recognized as “Program of the Year” by NAMI Ohio .

3. **NAMI Athens** is a real champion for the CIT program. They have assisted with the advanced training that bought in Pete Earley, helped to arrange the NAMI- Ohio one day corrections training and have provided scholarships to help pay for officers from smaller departments to attend the county's intensive training.

4. **There is a good media coverage** of CIT in the county. The agency's submitted a variety of newspaper articles and media pieces in several local publications including a couple of stories on the impact that the training has had on some potentially unpredictable encounters.

CIT TRAINING STRENGTHS

1. **Overall training-** The County has offered a 32 hour training each year for the past 7 years that has produced some 139 trained officers. This training fulfills the basic training needs of a variety of law enforcement and criminal justice staff. Specific, targeted learning objectives are attached to each block of the training. A review of the weighting of the 32 hour training schedule shows that over 4 hours is dedicating to the actual practice and demonstration of the skill set (role plays) which is supported by an hour block on de-escalation. Over 5 hours is spent on the mental illness and suicide block and presentations involving the perspective of consumers and family members is over 3.5 hours. While the training does not include site visits to mental health agencies, over three hours of the training is dedicated to community resources.

2. **Mental Illness Block-** The agency's teaching of the various mental illnesses includes a focus on what the officer observes and how this relates to actual interventions as opposed to diagnostic profiles or clinical symptomology of the various disorders. A wide variety of course material and handouts regarding mental illnesses are made available to the students as part of the training.

3. **De-escalation Block-** The agency has adopted the NEAR model as a way to organize, teach, and help officers retain the various de-escalation skills.

4. **Role play-** The role players are mostly members of the planning team who are familiar with the observable characteristics of mental illnesses. Over the years, the Planning Committee has developed a bank of twenty role play scenarios that are use for the training. Recently, the training included a couple of officer-students who wanted to act out a situation they had dealt with and this has been effective. David Malawista, who is a licensed psychologist in the state of Ohio, and Steve Noftz facilitate the role play scenarios.

5. **Consumers and NAMI** play a very active role in the training curriculum and include a consumers perspective living with SAMI and another on Schizophrenia. Regarding the latter, a local citizen has develop a training block called Schizophrenia from the Inside Out which has proved to be a powerful teaching opportunity and very well received by the CIT students. This

may be a best practice that Athens can highlight for the Coordinators at a future statewide meeting.

6. Officer Experiences- Another model training block developed by the county is, “What is your experience from the field? An interactive session with Participants” that explores with the students, early in the training, their actual in the line of duty encounters with individuals with mental illness. This block ties in well with the mental illness block as officers identify the types of mental illness encounters they have had experience with as well as de-escalation techniques.

7. Formal Evaluations for the last two intensive trains were reviewed and the results were very positive. The format of the evaluations also nicely capture pre-post information to show knowledge acquisition from the training.

CIT PROGRAM SUGESSTIONS

1. Consider the benefits of developing a more formal approach to growing the CIT program. While all CIT programs in Ohio are still maturing and developing in this area, a basic level of formality can position the program to better withstand changes in leadership and weathering financial hardships. The Athens Program lacks a certain degree of formality that may impede the groups effort to sustain and grow CIT. Presently there is not:

- a formal tracking mechanism to collect CIT encounter data,
- written CIT program goals around safety of encounters or diversions from jail,
- an overall program evaluation process,
- a delineation of roles and functions of the various CIT coordinators, including how new CIT coordinators are recruited to keep continuity across the program,
- a written agreement on the program’s interface with the mental health emergency services,
- a formal way to receive officer feedback on encounters that could then feed future trainings
- policies and procedures that support the implementation of CIT (policies governing the dispatch process, CIT officer authority and scene management). Some of these policies can help LE departments who are seeking or maintaining CALEA certification.

Natalie- after every suggestion, it would be nice to see if there is something the CCOE can arrange that we could put in the report. For example on this one, maybe the CCOE could put out an email to the list to start collecting examples of policies, encounter forms, and other relevant information. This is one area where the CCOE can serve as a clearing house.

2. Tracking of CIT graduates. The Advisory Board does a good job tracking the number of trainees since they started training in 2002. We would recommend that this tracking also include a way to track the number of those trained that are still on the force, in the line of duty.

CIT TRAINING SUGESSTIONS

1. Develop the means to grow the training beyond Athens County. The County's self-assessment identified several areas of improvement, including doing more outreach and follow-up to offer additional training, consultation and support to the departments outside of Athens County that have sent officers to previous trainings. The majority of CIT graduates from the tri-county area since 2003 have come from Athens County. NAMI has assisted in trying to incentive other jurisdictions through scholarship funds to pay for officer's time in going to the training. Even with this offering, few law enforcement jurisdictions in Hocking and Vinton counties have been trained. Reasons cited included the logistics involved in sending other county officers to Athens for the intensive training and the size of many of the rural forces are so small that it is difficult to send officers for the dedicated block of time. In addition, the time and resources it takes to put on a CIT training is a large undertaking. Some ideas discussed included taking the training on the road to the other counties, developing LE leadership/CIT champions from Hocking and Vinton counties who fully believe that CIT is a risk reduction training and who are in positions to provide officers for the training (the recent shooting of a mentally ill women in Toledo was discussed as a reminder of how fragile such encounters can be), or possibly offering the training in more manageable installments as opposed to 5 consecutive days for the smaller staffed departments.

Natalie, if you know of a county that has offered the training other then through 5 consecutive days, we could put a contact number. I was thinking that maybe if they talk to Tri-County (Miami, Darke, Shelby) as a county that, I believe has grown well beyond one county, or stating that there is the New Mexico DVD series as an example of content that can be provided to the officers that, while not CIT training, may still be better then no training at all)

2. Review the feasibility of “specializing” certain areas of the training. While the county has done a superb job in providing intensive training each year to a wide variety of law enforcement and criminal justice professionals, some specialization may strengthen the skill sets of the officers, especially in the areas of advanced/refresher training, and content training for corrections officers and dispatchers.

One advanced training has been offered to the graduates of the County's since its inception in 2003. For those officers on the street, refresher or advanced training courses allow for a review and practice with what officers are facing on the street since going through their initial training. Dispatchers would benefit from CIT training more specific to phone takers, i.e., identification of mental illness and practicing phone de-escalation using actual 911 calls, as well as emphasis on their role in conveying critical CIT related information from the call and dispatching CIT officers. While the pros and cons of offering separate trainings was discussed, "blended" trainings that have LE and corrections in the same class but allow for break-out sessions based on the content may benefit CIT training for corrections officers. Arguably, the legal block and the suicide training blocks for corrections officers can really explore the legal issues related to deliberate indifference in a corrections setting and how this relates to de-escalation. In addition, management of the suicidal inmate in prisons and jails can be a very comprehensive training block that is integrated with the jail's intake/booking processes as well as the jail's suicide policy.

Natalie- again, using the CCOE to provide examples of CIT training curriculums that are blended and or sample corrections/dispatch curriculums would be helpful.

3. Expand on the learning objectives for the legal block of the training. In reviewing the objectives for the 45 minute Mental Health Law block there are no objectives related to the connection of case law and de-escalation training. The legal standard of deliberate indifference and cursory reviews of some of the defining law suites can help to define CIT as a liability reduction training. As important, such case law provides the context for CIT's less authoritative de-escalation approach and sheds light on the actual de-escalation skills in such encounters (e.g., (Fisher v Hardin and corroboration of unconfirmed suicide/mental illness calls; Griffin v Coburn and application of the force continuum on an unarmed, mentally ill subject; or Byrd v Long Beach as it relates to expectations around verbal de-escalation).

Natalie- maybe we can put Chris as a contact here? He does a remarkable job of distilling these cases as to what is pertinent to the CIT officer. If we have collected other programs learning objectives of r the legal block, that may be helpful as well.

Attachment #1- CIT PROGRAM EVOLUTION

