

STUDY

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAMS

A Review of Research

A RESEARCH SUMMARY OF:

Academic Training to Inform Police Responses. (2021, March). *Assessing the Impact of Crisis Intervention Teams: A Review of Research*. Academic Training to Inform Police Responses.

TOPIC AREA:

- Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)
- CIT training
- De-escalation
- Behavioral health crises

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

- What is the crisis intervention team (CIT) model, and how can crisis intervention teams help law enforcement agencies respond to citizens experiencing a behavioral health crisis?
- What are the goals of the CIT model?
- Does the available research evidence suggest that crisis intervention teams are successfully achieving their goals?
- What is the impact of crisis intervention teams?
- What are some of the factors that help or hinder the effective implementation of crisis intervention teams?



KEY FINDINGS

- The CIT model is a police-led response to citizens experiencing a behavioral health crisis centered on training officers to properly recognize behavioral health crises, de-escalate these incidents, and connect citizens to the appropriate health services in lieu of making an arrest.
- The goals of the CIT model are to increase safety for officers and citizens, connect citizens experiencing behavioral health crises to services, reduce reliance on the criminal justice system, and improve relationships between the police, behavioral health workers, advocacy groups, and community members.
- A key aspect of the CIT model is training officers how to identify crisis incidents, respond to these incidents, and appropriately connect citizens experiencing a behavioral health crisis to treatment services in lieu of arrest.
- Surveys conducted with CIT-trained officers find that CIT training is associated with positive

outcomes in terms of officer knowledge and attitudes.

- Officers report improved knowledge of behavioral health conditions, a reduced stigma regarding mental illness, increased empathy, increased confidence in their ability to respond to crisis incidents, increased awareness of health services within the community, increased support for connecting citizens to health services, increased familiarity with de-escalation techniques, and increased support for the use of de-escalation.
- In addition to surveys of officer knowledge and attitudes, researchers also examined the impact of CIT on police interactions with citizens experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
 - CIT-trained officers are more likely to make referrals to behavioral health services than officers who have not been CIT-trained.
 - However, the evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness of CIT and the impact of CIT on officer use of force, officer injuries, number of arrests, and officer time spent responding to calls has generally been mixed. Further research is needed to investigate the impact of CIT on these outcomes.
- Interviews and focus groups with police officers, behavioral health service providers, and citizens with behavioral health conditions reveal that each of these groups report positive perceptions of CIT and believe that CIT improves law enforcement's ability to respond to crisis incidents.

METHODS USED:

- This article provides a review of all the available research regarding CIT, featuring 51 total peer-reviewed articles and technical reports.
- The included studies feature descriptive analyses, surveys, and stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

LIMITATIONS:

- The research in this area is largely limited to descriptive analyses of officer knowledge and attitudes. More rigorous research is needed to examine the impact and effectiveness of CIT on interactions with citizens in crisis.
- Law enforcement agencies often tailor their CIT program to fit the needs of their community. Furthermore, the availability of community behavioral health services may differ between agencies, meaning that there is substantial variation in design and delivery across CIT programs. As such, it may be difficult to generalize findings across jurisdictions and communities.

HOW DO THESE FINDINGS APPLY TO MY AGENCY?



The CIT model provides a promising option for improving police response to citizens experiencing a behavioral health crisis.



The available empirical evidence suggests that CIT can improve an officer's knowledge and perceptions of behavioral health and de-escalation, ability to identify and appropriately respond to crisis incidents, and awareness of behavioral health services in the community.

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