CIT Toolkit
Frequently Asked Questions

What is CIT?

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is a model community initiative designed to improve the outcomes of police interactions with people living with mental illnesses. CIT programs are built on local partnerships between law enforcement agencies, mental health providers and advocates (local NAMI Affiliates). They involve individuals living with mental illnesses and families at all levels of decision-making and planning. CIT programs typically provide 40 hours of training for law enforcement on how to better respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis. Equally important, CIT programs provide a forum for partner organizations to coordinate diversion from jails to mental health services.

In many communities, CIT has served as a springboard for a broader collaboration between the criminal justice and mental health systems. Many CIT programs have included partners from the juvenile justice system, courts, corrections, homeless services, children's mental health services, the Veterans Administration and others. Many CIT programs have begun to offer trainings to correctional officers, dispatchers, EMTs, firefighters, school resource officers, hospital safety officers and others. There are also CIT programs that offer trainings focused on responding to youth and veterans.

I've heard that CIT is a great training program. How do I get myself or my law enforcement agency trained?

Most CIT programs are started and sustained at the local level. That means that each community builds its own partnerships and conducts its own training. If there is a program in your local area, you can find out about it by contacting your local NAMI Affiliate or by searching the University of Memphis' CIT National Directory.

If there's not a CIT program in your community, you can start one. However, it's important to keep in mind that *CIT is not just a training program*. While one outcome of creating a CIT program is training for law enforcement, training is not the only goal. It's very important to go through the process of building partnerships with your law enforcement agency and mental health providers, as well as mapping out the problems and solutions in your community. These partnerships will help you understand what resources are available in a crisis and make it possible to plan effectively for diversion. They will also sustain the program over the long term, improve your chances for getting funding and most importantly, transform hearts and minds. To learn more about the importance of

community partnerships and how to build them, go to www.nami.org/cittoolkit and read "Community Partnerships."

But I thought CIT was like Family-to-Family. Why can't I just get my officers trained?

CIT is not like Family-to-Family. NAMI does not "own" the CIT program, so we cannot run a train-the-trainer. However, NAMI Affiliates have been partners in local CIT programs nationwide since the first program was started in Memphis is 1988.

If you community cannot conduct its own training, one good alternative is to approach a neighboring community with a CIT program and ask to be included in their training, or to band together with several communities to start a regional program. Whatever approach you take, you will still need to develop partnerships between law enforcement, mental health providers and the NAMI Affiliate in order to be successful in the long term.

The University of Memphis CIT Center does sometimes work with communities to provide a train-the-trainer. In order to ensure the success of the program, they require that communities they work with do a significant amount of preparation building their local partnerships before attending the training. For more information, go to their website.

I want to start a CIT program in my community. How do I get started?

Read Getting Started on the NAMI CIT Center webpage.

Is there a CIT program in my city/state? When is the next training in my area?

At this time, there isn't a national calendar for CIT trainings. If there is a program in your city or state, you can usually find out about it by contacting your local NAMI Affiliate or NAMI State Organization. You can also contact your local police or sheriff's department and ask; if they aren't part of a CIT program, you can tell them how much it would benefit the community! Finally, you can check the CIT National Directory on the University of Memphis website.

What is CIT for Youth?

CIT for Youth is an expansion of the CIT model that specifically addresses the needs of children and youth. CIT for Youth involves partnerships in addition to those in the standard CIT program, including school-based law enforcement officers, schools, child mental health providers and youth and their families. CIT for Youth programs work to divert children and youth from the juvenile justice

system to mental health services and supports, with the goal of keeping them in school and at home with their families.

CIT for Youth training includes topics unique to the needs of children and youth, including child and adolescent brain development, self injury, suicide and youth-focus role-plays and community resources.

Where can I see a copy of the CIT curriculum?

The University of Memphis CIT Center, in partnership with NAMI, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and CIT International has developed a national curriculum model and step-by-step guide for starting your own CIT program. The national curriculum model includes a curriculum outline and examples of lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations. While it is important to follow the general guidelines of the curriculum, most communities will adapt a curriculum to their local needs, using local experts to develop and teach the course.

You can also get a copy of a curriculum and see CIT in action by attending training in a neighboring state or community or in Memphis. To find a CIT program near you or to learn more about the Memphis training, contact the University of Memphis CIT Center at (901) 678-5523 or cit@memphis.edu.

Does CIT really work? What's the evidence that it's effective?

Yes, the research shows that CIT improves officer safety, improves officer attitudes to people with serious mental illness, and increases referrals to mental health services. For specifics, go to www.nami.org/cittoolkit and read "CIT Facts."

How much does CIT cost?

Not as much as you'd think. Many communities are able to do it with little or no money. For more information about how a CIT program can operate on mostly in-kind donations, go to www.nami.org/cittoolkit and read "The Cost of CIT."

How do I get funding to start a CIT program?

You may not need much funding to start up a CIT program. But if you are interested in applying for a grant, visit www.nami.org/cittoolkit and check out "Grant-Writing Tips for CIT Programs" and the other grant-writing tools on the site.

I've heard about a CIT conference. Does NAMI host it? How do I get a scholarship to attend?

CIT International hosts an annual CIT International Conference. The local NAMI Affiliate and State Organization in the host city often works with CIT International to plan the conference, and NAMI's national office usually helps promote the conference. However, NAMI's national organization is not the host of the conference.

Some years, NAMI has been able to offer scholarships to a limited number of individuals living with mental illness and their family members to attend the conference. Our ability to offer these scholarships is contingent on our annual budget. To find out whether there are scholarships available during a particular year, contact Laura Usher at laurau@nami.org.

How do I subscribe to the CIT in Action electronic newsletter?

NAMI's *CIT in Action* is a quarterly electronic newsletter that provides news and information about CIT and other criminal justice/mental health issues. To subscribe, go to www.nami.org and log in (or create a free account). Once you're logged in, click on "My Information," then click "Add Subscription" on the right hand side. You'll get a drop down menu of newsletters. Select "CIT in Action" from the list. Enter today's date as the start date, and leave the end date field blank.

How can NAMI's national office help me in my CIT efforts?

As mentioned above, NAMI doesn't conduct a train-the-trainer program for CIT. However, NAMI's CIT Center offers a variety of services:

- **Resources and information**: A wealth of information is available online at the NAMI CIT Center website. Our CIT Advocacy Toolkit provides a variety of resources for starting up your local CIT program. Finally, our CIT for Youth Resource Center provides comprehensive information about starting a CIT for Youth program. If there's something missing from our website that would be helpful to you, please let us know!
- **Connections with other CIT programs**. If you are looking for information about CIT in your community or state, we may be able to connect you with someone local who can help.
- **A quarterly CIT e-newsletter**, *CIT in Action*. To subscribe, go to www.nami.org and log in (or create a free account). Once you're logged in, click on "My Information," then click "Add Subscription" on the right hand side. You'll get a drop down menu of newsletters. Select "CIT in Action" from the list. Enter today's date as the start date, and leave the end date field blank.
- **A mailing list**. The forensic group is an email list that we use to distribute urgent calls to action, announcements about new resources and events, and requests for information related to CIT and the criminalization of

mental illness. If you would like to subscribe, send an email to Laura Usher at laurau@nami.org.

- **Advice and assistance**: You are always welcome to email or call if you have a question or a problem.
- **Resources on other criminal justice issues**. NAMI is active on a variety of criminal justice issues. For more information, visit our criminal justice webpage.

You can reach Laura Usher, NAMI CIT Program Manager at laurau@nami.org or 703-600-1109.

How can my NAMI Affiliate help me?

Your local NAMI Affiliate should be involved in any CIT program that starts in your community. NAMI Affiliates typically advocate starting the program and have a seat on the steering committee. NAMI members also frequently take on the role of coordinating the training program, and there is always a block of time in the training for a family and consumer perspective.

Where else can I find information and assistance?

There are several national organizations that provide information and assistance to CIT programs.

- University of Memphis CIT Center
- CIT International
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Council of State Governments' Justice Center:
- Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Police Executive Research Forum