



Governor Perdue, at the Capitol, recognizes the first graduating class of Georgia Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Law Enforcement Officers. These Officers are the first of 3,000 (20% of each jurisdiction), planned to receive the 40 hour intensive "first responder" course designed to safely and effectively intervene with adults and children with a "brain disorder," i.e. mental illnesses (schizophrenia, bi-polar, major depression), developmental disabilities (mental retardation), substance abuse, Alzheimer's, and autism.

The CIT teams are local community efforts of treatment professionals, business, judiciary, legal, corrections, educators, civic and faith based organizations, consumers and family members volunteering their instruction and involvement time. When feasible and available, people will be diverted into treatment rather than incarceration, providing the opportunity to move toward recovery and self-reliance as is realistic. The TEAM works together to create the local necessary recovery supports i.e., emergency receiving facilities, mental health courts, evaluation, medical/medications, counseling, housing, employment and outcome tracking and measurement supports.

Participating Officers are CIT Program volunteers and carry out their regular duties in addition to CIT. The program improves Officer professional development, provides immediate response 24/7, all precinct coverage, reduces costs and returns Officers to duty with minimum delay. CIT is Police Officer Standards Training (POST) certified training. CIT is a program of NAMI Georgia, www.namigeorgia.org, the state office of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, www.nami.org, in cooperation with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Police and Sheriff's Associations, Georgia Department of Human Resources and the Georgia Public Safety Training Center. One in five people will have a serious mental illness during their life. This is the first statewide implementation of CIT in the country. With community leadership through education and enlightenment - stigma - the number one cause of people not receiving and accepting treatment, will be reduced.

Photo: Courtesy, Office of the Governor. Front row, left to right, Terry Norris - Executive Director of the Georgia Sheriff's Association, Asst. Chief H.R. Dunovant, APD, Chief Gary Yandura - College Park PD, Joan Keenan - Retired Mental Health Professional, Vernon Keenan - Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Gwen Skinner - Director, DHR, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse, Governor Perdue, Paul Maharry - Georgia Police Chief's Association, Nora Lott-Haynes - NAMI Atlanta/Fulton CIT Coordinator, Dave Lushbaugh - President of NAMI Georgia and Curley Dossman - President of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation Foundation, who with NAMI Georgia members, provided the first funding to start Georgia CIT.