



# SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A TRADITION OF SERVICE SINCE 1856

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**SUBJECT:** Sheriff's Office Crisis Response Efforts

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Since 2005, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has been facilitating the Crisis Intervention Training academy, often referred to as CIT. This training has been implemented in partnership with San Mateo County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) and NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

CIT is a mandatory training for in-service law enforcement, providing education in how to recognize signs that someone may be in crisis due to mental illness or emotional distress. This is a 40-hour course taught by subject matter experts that supplements the 136 hours of training our law enforcement officers receive in the police academy and the average of four months of field training they all go through.

In conjunction with the police academy and field training programs, CIT provides classroom instruction and practical exercises in several key areas meant to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the community; areas such as:

- Mental Illnesses and Conditions
- Stigma
- The Effects of Trauma
- Crisis Behaviors De-escalation
- Veterans in Need
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Suicide
- Cultural Differences & Implicit Bias
- Youth Resources
- Adult Resources
- Developmental Disabilities
- Alzheimer's & Dementia
- Suicide by Cop

CIT also personalizes the topic of mental illness and illustrates the importance of an appropriate response by exposing our first responders to members of the public who have experienced or live with mental illness. CIT students are also exposed to family members of those who live with mental illness. These members of the public share with the students their experiences with mental illness as well as their experience, if any, with law enforcement. This interaction provides

invaluable perspective, discussions, and learning moments between our first responders and those who have first-hand and personal experience with mental illness.

Through education, CIT reinforces key principles that are practiced throughout the Sheriff's Office, that the ideal approach to any crisis is:

- 1. A compassionate response**
- 2. De-escalation, AND**
- 3. A peaceful resolution**

The training provided in CIT encourages our first responders, when it's appropriate and safe to do so, to utilize their knowledge and skills from CIT to attempt to reach that peaceful resolution everyone wants. Our county dispatchers also receive CIT training. Through our dispatch center, members of the public are able to request that a CIT deputy respond to a crisis situation. This service is offered and available in any language spoken by members of the public. In these situations, the first available CIT-trained deputy will respond.

The collaboration between the Sheriff's Office and Mental Health professionals doesn't end with CIT. The Sheriff's Office proudly pioneered a program called the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team, or PERT for short. PERT is a specialized unit that began in 2015 as a collaboration between the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and San Mateo County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS).

At first, PERT paired one Sheriff's Detective and one Mental Health Clinician from BHRS. Due to the overwhelming success of the program, the unit recently doubled in size, now utilizing two Sheriff's Detectives and two Mental Health Clinicians. This team focuses on Sheriff's Office cases involving known or suspected mental illness.

PERT also serves as a resource for Deputy Sheriffs in the field when they interact with members of the public who live with mental illness. PERT provides consultation to deputies and assists them in finding applicable resources and solutions to help promote a peaceful outcome.

Within those parameters, PERT conducts outreach, provides education, and strives to connect people to applicable services, with the major goals being:

- **First and Foremost: to reduce violent interactions and tragic outcomes involving law enforcement and those experiencing crisis**
- **to help manage acute crisis**
- **to reduce jail recidivism of those living with mentally illness**
- **to reduce emergency hospitalizations for psychiatric evaluation by diverting people to other community services and resources**

PERT provides a type of support to members of the public and their families that has never been offered by law enforcement in the greater Bay Area. The Sheriff's Office has proudly been on the forefront of this much needed service. The impact of PERT has been so positive that the Sheriff's Office receives numerous requests for guidance from other County and State police agencies who hope to begin their own version.

PERT is involved in many other outreach and educational efforts throughout San Mateo County. With the goal of providing an avenue of care for unlinked or underserved populations, PERT serves as the homeless liaison for the Sheriff's Office. In this capacity, PERT provides outreach to the mentally ill within the homeless community. PERT collaborates with established homeless outreach teams to educate and offer resources to those who may need a little extra help. These members of society may have no other avenue to assistance and are often only exposed to negative interactions with law enforcement. PERT is working to change that experience.

PERT also responds to requests for community presentations in an effort to educate the public about the resources available in this county.

Now that almost 100% of Sheriff's Office patrol deputies are trained in CIT, the Sheriff's Office recognized a need for even more training. Working off a model established by the Portland Police Bureau, the Sheriff's Office has built the framework for an Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT). ECIT deputies will be given even more training in the areas of compassionate and effective crisis response. These deputies will be assigned to a patrol function and work closely with PERT, further linking the Sheriff's Office and Mental Health professionals. We plan to have a functioning ECIT unit soon.

The Sheriff's Office recognizes the need for constant progress in the area of crisis response and fully intends to continue moving in that direction.