Portage County 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 to collect these emerging best practices is through a "Peer Review Process". The peer review is 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 review team's observations.

The Portage County Program should be congratulated for its willingness to undergo the Peer Review Process. A Site visit was conducted on June 10, 2010 by the Review Team and the following CIT Planning Committee members: Officer Jeff Futo (Kent State University PD); Sgt Andy Suvada (Streetsboro PD); Carrie Suvada (Waterloo School District); Emily Ribnik, LPC (Coleman Professional Services); and Joel Mowrey, Ph.D (Mental Health and Recovery Board of Portage County).

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 reviewers have learned a lot and have concrete ideas on how to improve their own CIT programs in Hancock and Darke, Miami, and Shelby counties, the ultimate test of the benefit of this Peer Review Process will be if the report and resource matching accomplished via the CCOE helps Portage County strengthen their program. We hope it does.

INTRODUCTION: When meeting with the Portage 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 such as a twelve hour training not including scenario based (role play) training.

It is when the Core elements are used to define "fidelity" within CIT programs, that natural tensions arise regarding how to address program individuality such as rural vs. urban, large vs. small departments, disparities in resources, and how well developed other Criminal Justice initiates are within a county, like specialized courts and/or jail diversion programs. The CCOE recognizes all of these issues impact how the core elements are addressed in individual programs.   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 their goal is not to determine "fidelity" within the Portage county program, but rather use the Core elements to focus discussions on program development and increased formalization of local processes. To illustrate this, the reviewers provided a handout "The CIT Pyramid" depicting the typical path CIT program development can take (see Attachment #1). The planning committee and reviewers concurred the program has successfully created specialized training for other CIT groups and offered CIT graduates advanced training (level 3) and are interested in moving towards level 4 where departments would be setting goals for % of officers trained, collecting data on safety outcomes of CIT calls, reviewing CIT incidents, % of times CIT officers were dispatched appropriately, and identifying safety and training trends/issues. The CJ - CCOE is currently collecting examples of policies, encounter forms, and other relevant information that may be helpful in making improvements in these identified areas.

As CIT develops beyond training and into a full fledged diversion/risk reduction program, the essential elements can become more formalized with written polices, 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 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 three program strengths: its strong collaboration between the law enforcement departments and the mental health system, especially good support for the CIT program by police; the positive feedback received on a number of occasions from the community when a CIT officer has been involved with a mental health consumer, successfully de-escalating a situation and preventing arrest.; and role plays for both the police and dispatcher trainings seem to be very effective and realistic. 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. The composition of this group is a passionate and committed group that includes representation from law enforcement, mental health, Kent State university, local schools, courts, and family members from Portage County.

2. **CIT Coordination**- The Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County and Coleman Professional Services have provided steady and consistent support to the CIT planning. Jeff Futo, Andy Suvada, and Dennis Missimi have proven to be strong local CIT ambassadors from the law enforcement community. Jeff has worked diligently to establish a strong CIT program on the campus of Kent State University. Dennis Missimi's commitment to the CIT has led to his taking a position with the Portage Co. Sheriff's Department as their CIT County Coordinator. Andy Suvada and his wife have worked diligently to create a CIT companion course for school personnel out of their passion for CIT even utilizing a school bus for role-plays involving student and parent interactions with bus drivers. Andy Suvada was recognized by NAMI Ohio as "Officer of the Year" in 2008.

3. **NAMI of Portage County** have provided family members as speakers for the CIT training to ensure that officers have the opportunity to hear how their loved ones' recovery effects them.

4. **Portage County CIT Education Collaboration** – The reviewers believe this 40 hr training is a model for other CIT programs. The extensive work invested into developing a training for all levels of school personnel from bus drivers to principals is an example of innovation born out of excellent community collaboration. The reviewers are impressed with the training as well as the collaboration that had to occur to have it approved as a graduate level course for Ashland University and Kent State University

5. **Jail Diversion Program –** Coleman Professional Services, the local mental health center, has worked with the Portage County courts to create the Jail Diversion Program. This program offers consumers with legal charges the opportunity to participate in probation in lieu of incarceration with the incentive being at the end of probation their charges will be expunged and their monthly probation fees are waived as long as the consumer is following all of the probation requirements.

6. **CIT Graduate Connection** – Efforts to keep local CIT graduates informed about CIT related issues and upcoming trainings is coordinated through the Portage County CIT webpage (http://citportage.ning.com/). The utilization of a webpage to keep CIT graduates connected as well as to allow for discussion on "hot topics" is an excellent use of media.

7. **Recognition of the CIT Program & CIT Officers** – Annually, the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County in collaboration with the CIT coordinators identifies a local CIT Officer of the Year. In addition, the local program has submitted nominations for the OH CIT Officer of the Year. The program received a Founder's Award locally for their contribution to the community.

CIT TRAINING STRENGTHS

1. **Overall training**- The County has offered 6 sessions of their 40 hour training since its inception in 2006; there were two sessions held in 2006 and 2007. In Portage County, there are

382 OPOTA State of Ohio certified officers with 104 of the officers having completed CIT training; thus, 27% of the law enforcement officers are trained in CIT. In most instances, specific, targeted learning objectives were identified in the powerpoints for each block of training. A review of the weighting of the 40 hour training schedule shows that approximately 6 hours is dedicating to the actual practice and demonstration of the skill set (role plays) which is supported by a three hour block on de-escalation and tactical safety skills. Four hours are utilized for developing a foundation in mental illness including blocks identified as: introduction to mental health; crisis with kids/adolescents; suicide prevention; and substance abuse/mental illness (SAMI) population. Perspective of consumers and family members is approximately 2 hours with an additional 3 hours spent in ride-alongs with case managers. In addition, there is an hour section devoted to a county overview of mental health services with representatives from 9 agencies.

2. **De-escalation Block**- The agency has adopted the EAR model as a way to organize, teach, and help officers retain the various de-escalation skills. In preparing officers to de-escalate encounters involving suicidal intent, the program uses the QPR (Question Persuade, Refer) model. While the training included a variety of mental health conditions (PTSD, DV,) most of the content had specific information related to how the de-escalation encounter is affected by the condition.

3. **Role play**- The role players are theater students from Kent State University who are familiar with the observable characteristics of mental illnesses. Over the years, the Planning Committee has developed a bank of role play scenarios that are scripted. Scenarios are utilized more than once so that CIT students can observe how different officers engage in de-escalation. Jeff Futo, KSU CIT Coordinator, and Sgt. Andy Suvato, Streetsboro Police Department facilitate the role play scenarios.

4. **Consumers and NAMI** play a very active role in the training curriculum and include a consumer's perspective living with MI. The same consumer has presented this block for several years now and is well received by the officers.

5. **Law Enforcement Ride-alongs** – From its inception, Portage County CIT program has included a case manager/law enforcement ride along component. This type of learning experience is invaluable to a law enforcement officer because it creates an opportunity to experience the day to day activities of a mental health case manager. Consistently, officers have reported this training component as a key to building empathy for consumers and the mental health professionals who interact with them.

6. **Formal Evaluations** – The formal evaluations from the September 2009 training were reviewed. The planning committee reports utilizing the comments noted by participants as planning tools future trainings. The members present all noted the training is "tweeked" from year to year based on participant feedback.

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CIT PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

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 Portage County Program lacks a certain degree of formality that may impede the group's effort to sustain and grow CIT. Presently there is not:

- A formal selection process of CIT officers that includes a written application, an interview, and a background investigation;
- A formal tracking mechanism to collect CIT encounter data across all departments utilizing CIT.
- Policies and procedures that support the implementation of CIT (polices governing the dispatch process, goals related to % of officers trained, CIT officer authority and scene management). Some of these policies can help LE departments who are seeking or maintaining CALEA certification.
- A consumer representative on the CIT planning or advisory board.
- A formal way to receive officer feedback on encounters that could then feed future trainings
- Written CIT program goals around safety of encounters at local hospitals for consumers needing medical clearance order to divert from arrests & subsequent placement injail,
- A delineation of roles and functions of the various CIT coordinators, including how new CIT coordinators are recruited to keep continuity across the program,

The CJ - CCOE is currently collecting examples of policies, encounter forms, and other relevant information that may be helpful in making improvements in these identified areas.

2. **Tracking of CIT graduates**. The Advisory Board does a good job tracking the number of trainees since they started training in 2006. We would recommend that this tracking also include a way to track the number of those trained that are still employed with local law enforcement departments.

3. **Strengthen the planning of the CIT program.** – The planning committee meets one time each year. While the 40 hour training is operating & running smoothly, the planning committee meeting regularly could assist in the evolution of the CIT program to assist with developing law enforcement/mental health policies and protocols that could be implemented across all of the law enforcement departments in Portage County. Meeting regularly may also assist with recruitment of CIT coordinators from each department that has CIT trained officers.

4. **Strengthen the Oversight of the CIT Program** - The County's Steering Committee has not meet over the last year. It may be helpful to have the Advisory committee meet at least bi-yearly. This group should review the CIT Pyramid and the Peer Review and develop (or delegate to the

planning committee) a plan on how the county can implement a more formal approach to growing its CIT program through trainings and program evaluations.

CIT TRAINING SUGESSTIONS

1. **Review the blocks of training to determine if some topics may be "mission creep" for the initial 40 hour training.** Due to CIT's success in building collaborative relationships between the mental health community & law enforcement, each CIT program must be aware of the risk of "mission creep". This is when legitimate social or other health related training issues are incorporated into the initial 40 hour training. The risk associated with "mission creep" is strong CIT programs begin to move outside of their original mission or purpose and in doing so the original program begins to lose its effectiveness or its focus. The county has worked diligently to include many "specialized" topic areas such as domestic violence, autism, excited delirium, and post traumatic stress. The initial 40 hours may be better utilized to focus on building a foundation of knowledge around adolescent and adult mental illness, de-escalation skills, and how to access local crisis services. Then, advanced or continuing training for CIT graduates could be designed around how mental health issues intertwine with other issues such as domestic violence, autism, excited delirium, and PTSD.

    Other suggestions for the training schedule include re-evaluating the length of time given to the "Introduction to CIT" on Day 1 and considering having the case managers as part of their ride along experiences with the officers providing a county overview of services.

2. **Maximize opportunities for small group learning and interactive learning exercises.**
Adult learners best learn in environments where there is a balance between opportunities for visual, auditory, kinesthetic (interactive), and environmental (surroundings that match learner preferences such as room temperature, lighting, seating, etc.). The powerpoints reviewed contain excellent information but a strong theme in the evaluations was the overreliance of this type of teaching style and the lack of other modes of learning. To enhance participant learning it may be helpful to work with each presenter to add other types of learning into their presentations such as demonstrations, small group learning, and/or interactive learning exercises.

3. **Review feasibility of offering "refresher/advanced" trainings at least annually for CIT graduates.** While the county has offered two advanced/refresher courses in April 2006 and May 2009, it is often beneficial for people to refresh their skills through continued learning opportunities. These types of annual trainings assist in strengthening the skill sets of the officers and providing them with updated system information pertinent to their jobs.

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. Other suggestions may include a suicide training for corrections officers which expores 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.

Attachment #1- CIT PROGRAM EVOLUTION

Lower Formality

Early Emphasis on Training

Begin to document practices and routines

Emphasis shifts to effectiveness and sustainability

Higher Formality

Committed group of stakeholders who want to bring CIT to their community

Conduct First Intensive Training!
(create ways to feed and nurture trainees)

Repeat training and begin keeping basic data on graduates. Use local media to create positive awareness of CIT. Identify recruitment process and CIT coordinators

Create specialized training for other CIT groups (corrections, dispatch). Offer advanced training to CIT officers based on Line of Duty issues

Set goals (% of trained officers per-shift; number of CIT incidents to be reviewed, safety outcomes of encounters, % of calls dispatched appropriately to a CIT officer)

Start assembling ways to identify the program's impact on safety and stigma (people's stories, program evaluations, CIT encounter data). Formalize CIT's mission/function within the wider array of CJ/MH initiatives (Diversion programs, MH courts, jail based services, CISM teams)

Formalize LE/MH policies/protocols that clarify CIT and sustain its role (emergency services roles and hand-off, dispatch CIT officer notification, on-scene authority of CIT officer and relationship to SWAT)

Develop a systematic improvement process using available data to continuously improve trainings, attain program goals and document safety outcomes

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