



# OHIO CIT NEWS



Winter 2020

## A Veterans Suicide Prevention Operation **S.A.V.E.**

By Chief William A. Robinson & Dr. Heather Robinson, Psy.D, ABPP  
VA Central Ohio Healthcare System

As the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) Lead Chief of Police for Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, I (Chief Robinson) have the unfortunate job of reviewing all the suicide attempts across the VISN. There is one attempt that immediately comes to mind when I think about Operation **S.A.V.E.**

Several years ago, the Columbus VA had a Veteran present to the Behavioral Health intake clinic who had “hit rock bottom.” The Veteran told the provider he did not have any reason to live and he was going to electrocute himself. The Veteran then took off running out the doors and towards an electrical substation adjacent to the Columbus VA. As the Veteran got to the top of the 8-foot chain link fence, topped with barbed wire, he said, “I’m going to end it all now and I know how to do it.” The Veteran made it over the first and second electrified fences and was on his way towards the deadly high voltage conductors. The VA Police Officers, who are also Veterans, were able to catch up to him as he climbed over the second fence. When the officers caught up with him, they were able to see the Veteran was in distress and needed help.

By using Operation **S.A.V.E.**, the officers were able to notice the signs of suicidal thinking in the Veteran. One of the officers was able to engage the Veteran by validating his experiences with the military and by using his own experiences from when he was in the military. By doing this, it helped the Veteran, who was experiencing hopelessness, focus his attention on the officer and his military experiences as well. Relating to the officer with his similar experiences, the officer was able to talk the Veteran away from the deadly high voltage conductors and took him back to the VA to receive treatment.

The Veteran served two tours in Iraq and while there, he saw the bloody, deadly carnage of war, too many times. After retiring from the Army in 2008, he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and related physical ailments. He had been in and out of treatment programs and unable to cope with the images that followed him home. Today, the Veteran is still receiving treatment and is thankful to the officers for saving his life that day.

As the Director of the Trauma Recovery Division at the Columbus VA, I (Dr. Robinson) am all too familiar with experiences like the Veteran’s in this article. But with that Veteran’s crisis, you have an example of how impactful Operation **S.A.V.E.** can be. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has adopted Operation **S.A.V.E.** to help officers act with care and compassion when encountering a Veteran in crisis contemplating suicide. The acronym “SAVE” describes the steps needed to take an active role in preventing suicide:

- S**igns of suicidal thinking
- A**sk questions
- V**alidate the person’s experience
- E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting the person help

**S**igns of suicidal thinking can be obvious such as threatening to self-harm, seeking access to means to self-harm, talking or writing about death/dying, isolating from loved ones and/or giving away possessions. However, some signs are less obvious such as feeling hopeless, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, and/or believing there is no reason for living.

**A**sking questions is how to gather more information to determine if someone is suicidal. Communicating in a concerning and understanding manner will aid in the person answering those questions. Your behavior is also important when talking with a Veteran in crisis. Remembering to:

- Remain calm
- Allow the Veteran to speak
- Maintain eye contact
- Be supportive and encouraging

If you believe a Veteran is suicidal, don't be afraid to directly ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. It is not an easy question but asking a Veteran if they are suicidal does not increase the chances of suicide or suicidal thoughts. It communicates that you are open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive way.

**V**alidating a Veteran's experience by listening to them, acknowledging their feelings, not passing judgement, and letting them know you are there to help encourages them to be open and answer difficult questions honestly.

**E**ncouraging treatment and expediting the Veteran getting help will assist with not only resolving the current crisis but could also help in preventing future crises. Explaining there are people who can help, and that mental health treatment is no different than medical treatment can help a person feel more comfortable agreeing to receive mental health support and services.

Many local VA's have information they can give you when encountering a Veteran in the field. Feel free to reach out to your local facility to inquire about the resources they have available. You can also call the VA Suicide Hotline number (1-800-273-TALK – push "1") and the Veteran can talk to a mental health professional who can connect them with the local VA.

We have also been fortunate enough to partner with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE) and have developed a training class called *Veterans in Crisis Awareness Training for First Responders - PTSD, Suicide Prevention, and available Resources*. During the training module, we provide information on how to recognize veterans in a mental health crisis, engage and effectively communicate with them, evaluate their mental state, and how to properly resolve the crisis and refer them to mental health services. Materials for this training will soon be available on the CJ CCoE website.

Chief Robinson

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# What is Operation SAVE?

Operation SAVE will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis. The acronym SAVE helps one remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

1. **S**igns of suicidal thinking should be recognized
2. **A**sk the most important question of all
3. **V**alidate the Veteran's experience
4. **E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting help

Stand by a Veteran in crisis  
You can make a difference and help save a life



## Stand by Them

You can help a Veteran. Keep these tips in mind when talking with a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide:

- Remain calm
- Listen more than you speak
- Maintain eye contact
- Act with confidence
- Do not argue
- Use open body language
- Limit questions – let the Veteran do the talking
- Use supportive, encouraging comments
- Be honest – there are no quick solutions but help is available

#### Additional Resources:

- **VA Mental Health Services:** Get information about inpatient and outpatient services available through VA at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)
- **Online Resource Locator:** Find VA facilities, VetCenters, suicide prevention coordinators, and other VA resources at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator)
- **Make the Connection:** Veterans and their loved ones can find out how to connect with VA resources at [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Locate the VA PTSD program nearest you at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)



## Operation SAVE Stand by Them



09/16/12

..... Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 .....



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# Operation SAVE: Supporting Our Veterans

## Signs of suicidal thinking

There are behaviors that may be signs a Veteran needs help. Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.



## Ask the Question

It is important to ask direct questions. Know how to ask the most important question of all:

*"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"*

Other ways to ask the question include:

*"Are you thinking of suicide?"*

*"Have you had thoughts about taking your own life?"*

When asking the question, remember:

- DO ask the question if you've identified warning signs or symptoms
- DO ask the question in such a way that is natural and flows with the conversation
- DO NOT ask the question as though you are looking for a 'no' answer ("You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?")
- DO NOT wait to ask the question until he/she is halfway out the door

## Validate the Veteran's Experience

As you listen to the Veteran, let him or her do the talking and use supportive, encouraging comments. Use the following steps to let the Veteran know that you are listening and acknowledge his or her experience.

- Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow the Veteran to express his or her feelings
- Recognize that the situation is serious
- Do not pass judgment
- Reassure that help is available



..... Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 .....

## Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help

If you think someone is suicidal, remain calm and reassure the Veteran that help is available.

- DO NOT keep the Veteran's suicidal behavior a secret
- DO NOT leave him or her alone
- Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital or emergency room, or
- Call 911

You can also call the confidential **Veterans Crisis Line** at **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1.

## Safety Is Important

- Never negotiate with someone who has a gun. Get to safety and call 911.
- If the Veteran has taken pills, cut himself or herself, or has done harm to himself or herself in some way, call 911.



## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Each VA medical center has PTSD specialists who provide treatment for Veterans with PTSD symptoms. For more information about PTSD and to locate the VA PTSD program nearest you, visit [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)
- PTSD Coach App: The PTSD Coach application allows phone users to manage their symptoms, links them with local sources of support, and provides information on PTSD. Visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDCoach.asp>

## Veterans Crisis Lines, Suicide Prevention, Chat and Text

1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

[VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)

Text to 838255

- Each VA Medical Center has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) to make sure Veterans receive needed counseling and services. Find your local SPC at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator)
- *MakeTheConnection.net* is a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions. On this site, Veterans and their families and friends can learn about available resources and support. Visit [MakeTheConnection.net](http://MakeTheConnection.net) to learn more.

## Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist Contacts, Ohio

Chillicothe, Chillicothe VA Medical Center, [Tisha Hardin](#), [Jeenee Hines](#)

Cincinnati, Cincinnati VA Medical Center, [Jennifer Wolfe](#), [Ronald Michaelson](#), [Bethany Hamilton-Clary](#), [Seana Creech](#), [Anne Karp](#)

Cleveland, Louis Stokes VA Medical Center, [Dwayne Williams](#), [Victoria Marion](#), [Cailen Haggard](#), [Michael Casto](#)

Columbus, Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center, [Mary Gillette](#), [Bobby Perkins](#), [Marilyn Brink](#)

Dayton, Dayton VA Medical Center, [Melissa Hall](#), [William Layman](#), [Gina Kicos](#), [Germica Chenault](#)

Toledo, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, [Leslie Witherell](#)



# A Collaborative Effort to Address Mental Health Emergencies in Union County

Submitted By: Lieutenant Matt Warden Union County Sheriff's Office

In January 2020, a collaborative effort was launched in Union County between the Sheriff's Office, the Union County Commissioners, and the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Union County to address the increasing number of mental health emergencies in our community. The three entities joined together to create a full-time deputy sheriff position that focuses entirely on the mental health and critical incident challenges of our community.



Deputy Morgan Brown, a three-year employee of the Sheriff's Office and also a military veteran of the United States Air Force, was selected to fill this new position. He will coordinate crisis intervention team (CIT) responses and training for Union County Public Safety Agencies, as well as participate as the law enforcement coordinator for the Union County Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team. "As a patrol deputy, Deputy Brown has already been involved in several tragic suicides as a first responder in our community. His compassion and ability to connect with and help the devastated families is invaluable," commented Union County Sheriff Jamie Patton.

The Critical Incident Stress Management Team in Union County is a team of public safety and affiliate professionals from fire, EMS, law enforcement, industry, education, and other organizations that are available to respond to any type of critical incident. The CISM team helps people learn to be resistant, resilient, and to recover from critical incident stress. The CISM team is available to respond to a wide range of events including line of duty deaths, multi-causality incidents, violence to a child, suicides, and incidents where responders know the victim.

Mackenzie Poling, Program Coordinator for this project for the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Union County said "This position is part of our Stepping Up Initiative, which seeks to reduce the number of people with mental illness in our jails. Having a crisis intervention deputy working full time with clients and on programming will be a tremendous boost to our local efforts." As part of his regular duties, Deputy Brown will assist with wraparound initiatives as well as data collection and analysis. "Our goal is to have all of our deputies and 9-1-1 dispatchers trained in CIT techniques and be able to utilize good de-escalation skills. Unfortunately, our county, like many others, have seen a steady increase in calls for service with those experiencing some form of mental health crisis.", concluded Sheriff Patton.

# Congratulations to Officer Robert (Bob) Hatcher of Delaware Police Dept., the Delaware County 2020 CIT Officer of the Year

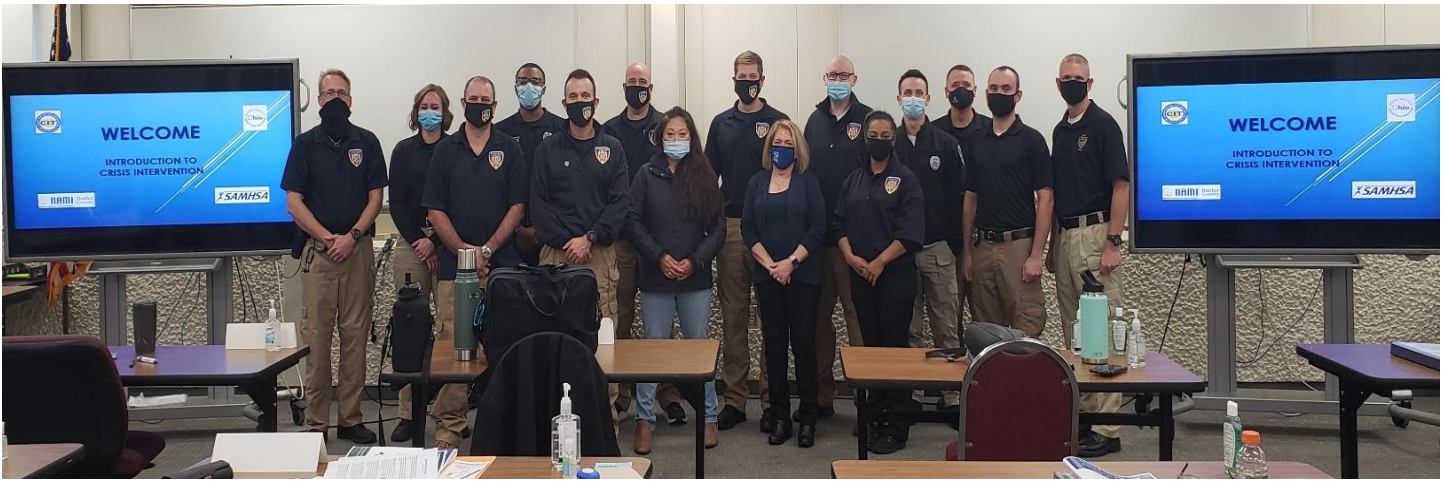


## Recent Ohio CIT Course Graduates

Montgomery County completed CIT Training in October 2020



## Butler County completed CIT Training in November 2020



On the last day of the training, Butler County had a distinguished panel of Judges from several courts attend. Each Judge spoke about their role with their mental health or specialty docket. A Q&A session with the students followed.

Judges/Magistrate in attendance:

- Mental Health Court - Area III in West Chester (Judge Haughey)
- SAMI Court - Hamilton (Judge Howard)
- Probate Court - Hamilton (Judge Rogers)
- Felony Drug Court - Hamilton (Judge Spaeth)
- Veterans Court - Middletown (Judge Sherron)
- Family Drug Court - Hamilton (Magistrate Wilkerson)

Wayne and Holmes Counties completed CIT Training in October 2020

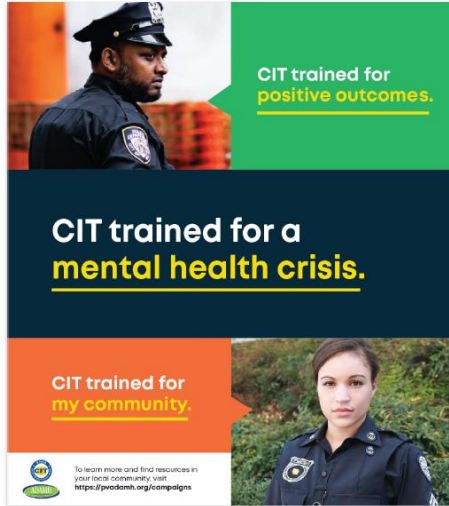


Stark County completed CIT Training in November 2020



# CIT Promotion Showcase – Paint Valley

A portion of Paint Valley's (Fayette, Highland, Pickaway, Pike and Ross Counties) Support and Expansion subaward project focuses on marketing materials for the local CIT program, including virtual ads, billboards, radio ads, and newspaper ads. Take a look!




CIT trained for **positive outcomes.**

CIT trained for a **mental health crisis.**

CIT trained for **my community.**

To learn more and find resources in your local community, visit <https://pvadamh.org/campaigns>



More than training, **building hope.**

**WHO**  
The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) intervention team model brings together law enforcement agencies and mental health experts to better prepare police officers when responding to a mental health crisis.

**WHAT**  
CIT has trained over **10,000** law enforcement officers in Ohio.

**WHY**  
CIT training is the foundation for building those with a mental illness and improves the likelihood of safety for officers and for citizens.

**GOAL**  
CIT's goal is to have specially trained officers available to all communities 24 hours a day.



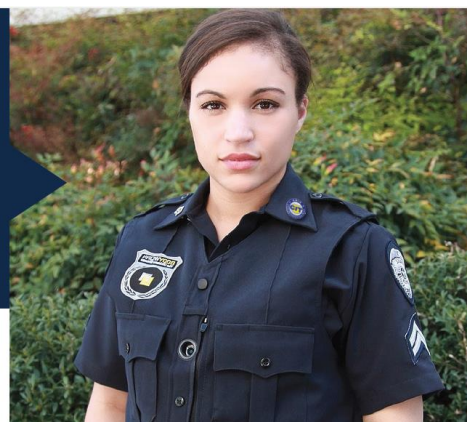
**CIT trained for my community.**

Be prepared as a CIT trained officer. Visit: <https://pvadamh.org/campaigns> for more information.



**CIT trained for positive outcomes.**

Be prepared as a CIT trained officer. Visit: <https://pvadamh.org/campaigns> for more information.



# Ohio CIT Support and Expansion Project

As many of you are aware, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE) received state funding through the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for Ohio CIT Support and Expansion. The project provides support for a variety of activities and training opportunities related to CIT program development, including but not limited to: Law Enforcement agency scholarships, CIT training mini grants, CIT program development subawards to Ohio county and multi-county CIT programs, regional or statewide training opportunities for partner groups, updated statewide strategic planning and more.

CJ CCoE staff members hold planning calls with local CIT Coordinator(s) and/or Steering Committee members to develop program plans and deliverables for each community. As of December 14, 2020, 26 subawards, representing 51 counties, have been executed. These subawards focus on advanced, companion and refresher CIT courses, policy and procedure development and implementation, information gathering and sharing, and much more!

To discuss CIT program development and training opportunities and to apply for a subaward, please contact Haley Farver at [hfarver@neomed.edu](mailto:hfarver@neomed.edu) or 330-325-6815.

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## Save-the-Date

### Ohio Advanced CIT Training Conference

**When: April 16, 2021**

**Where: State Highway Patrol Training Academy, Columbus (may be moved to a virtual platform)**

**Please save-the-date and pass word along to your local CIT Coordinators, CIT trained officers, correction professionals, dispatchers, mental health, and advocacy partners.**

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## Coming Soon

### Nominations for Statewide CIT Awards

**Nomination forms for the Statewide CIT awards will be forthcoming! Award categories include CIT Officer of the Year, CIT Corrections Professional of the Year, Person with Lived Experience of the Year, Michael S. Woody CIT Coordinator of the Year, and more. Please be on the lookout for nomination information in January 2021!**



# From NAMI Ohio

## CIT Mini Grants and Law Enforcement Scholarships

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence and NAMI Ohio collaborate to make mini grants and scholarships available to Ohio CIT training programs. Funding for mini grants and scholarships is made possible through awards from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

CIT Mini Grants to Support full CIT Courses: Mini grants in the amount of **\$1,800** are available to offset the costs of hosting full CIT courses or academies. Communities can request a mini grant for each 40-hour (or equivalent) course held between July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

CIT Mini Grants for Advanced, Refresher, or Companion Training: Mini grants in the amount of **\$1,000** are available for those communities wishing to offer advanced, refresher, or companion trainings. This includes training that does not meet the full 40-hours requirement but seeks to provide advanced topic training to existing CIT officers, refresher training to existing CIT officers, or companion training to key CIT partners, e.g., dispatchers, fire/EMS, behavioral health providers.

CIT Scholarships for Law Enforcement Agencies to send Personnel to CIT Training: Scholarships of **\$1,800** are available for Law Enforcement agencies sending police officers for the first time to complete the full 40-hours CIT course. These scholarships prioritize agencies who have not participated in CIT training in the past. A limited number of scholarships are available to agencies that have participated in the past but have financial constraints affecting their ability to send additional officers.

CIT Scholarships for Telecommunications Professionals: Telecommunications Centers sending dispatch supervisors to the full CIT training can receive scholarships for **\$1,300**. Dispatchers are encouraged to attend Companion Training when that is available. Scholarships are based on the length of the course: 4 hours: **\$125**; 8 hours: **\$250**; 16 hours: **\$500**; 24 hours: **\$750**. Centers sending a dispatcher to a full CIT training because a companion training is unavailable can request **\$750**.

If you previously submitted a request, it is not necessary to submit a new request. If you want to add trainings to your existing request, you can do so through an email to Luke Russell ([luke@namiohio.org](mailto:luke@namiohio.org)), identifying the type of training to be held and the dates of training.

### **For all mini grant requests, please provide the following information:**

1. Type of training (full CIT course, advanced, refresher, companion)
2. Date of the training
3. A list of the members of your CIT Steering Committee
4. Name and address of the entity to whom the check should be made payable (in the case of scholarships, this should be specific law enforcement agencies or telecommunications centers)
5. Name of law enforcement agency and name and rank/position of specific personnel who will attend training (required for scholarships only)
6. Completed roster of all graduates, and for advanced, refresher and companion trainings the type and length of the training upon completion.

**All mini grants and scholarships will be paid after completion of the training and once the training roster is verified.**

**All mini grant and scholarship requests should be made by the county CIT Program Coordinator and sent to Luke Russell at NAMI Ohio: [luke@namiohio.org](mailto:luke@namiohio.org)**





## Upcoming CIT Courses

- Montgomery County January 12-16, 2021
- Clark, Greene, Madison Counties January 25-29, 2021
- Wayne and Holmes Counties January 25-29, 2021
- Seneca, Sandusky, Wyandot, Erie, Ottawa, and Huron Counties February 4, 11, 18, 25 and March 4
- Muskingum, Coshocton, Noble, Perry, Guernsey, and Morgan Counties March 29-April 1, 2021
- Ross, Pike, Fayette, Highland and Pickaway, Counties April 5-9, 2021
- Miami, Darke, and Shelby Counties April 12-15, 2021
- Richland County April 12-16, 2021
- Cuyahoga County April 26-30, 2021
- Seneca, Sandusky, Wyandot, Erie, Ottawa, and Huron Counties April 29, May 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2021
- Seneca, Sandusky, and Wyandot Counties May 5, 12, 19, 26 and June 2, 2021
- Washington County May 3-7, 2021

Please advise Ashley Eads at [aeads@neomed.edu](mailto:aeads@neomed.edu) of your planned CIT Courses for 2021!



# Ohio CIT Program Coordinator or Contact Information

Note: information is subject to change

<b>Allen/Auglaize/Hardin</b> Rick Skilliter <a href="mailto:rskilliter@pvff.org">rskilliter@pvff.org</a>
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<b>Montgomery</b> Jodi Long <a href="mailto:JLong@mcadamhs.org">JLong@mcadamhs.org</a> Det. Patty Tackett <a href="mailto:Patricia.tackett@daytonohio.gov">Patricia.tackett@daytonohio.gov</a>
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# National News and Updates

## CIT International – Conference Registration

CIT International's annual conference will be held on August 16 – 18, 2021 in Phoenix, Arizona. To register visit [www.citinternational.org/events](http://www.citinternational.org/events)

Please pass word along to your local CIT officers and Law Enforcement agencies.



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