

Law Enforcement Response to Youth with Mental Health Needs

In 2016, more than 850,000 youth under the age of 18 were arrested. Many youth come in contact with law enforcement for disruptive or delinquent behaviors that are related to an untreated or undetected mental, substance, or trauma-related condition. Law enforcement officers' responses to calls involving a youth experiencing a mental health crisis and their initial decisions can have a significant and profound impact on a youth and his or her family. This initial contact with law enforcement represents an opportunity to connect the youth with emergency mental health services or refer the youth for behavioral health screening and evaluation. However, successful and effective diversion requires training that enables officers to understand the basics of adolescent development, recognize the signs and symptoms of behavioral health conditions, and utilize available designated services.

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The CIT-Y Curriculum

The standard CIT training offered to most police officers focuses primarily on response techniques for adults. While there are some general similarities between adults and youth, there are important and unique distinctions that require specialized knowledge and training. CIT-Y trains police officers on response techniques that are appropriate for youth with behavioral health needs.

Topics Covered:

- Adolescent Brain Development
- Impacts of Childhood Trauma
- Historical and Intergenerational Trauma
- Signs and Symptoms of Behavioral Health Conditions
- Impact of Treatment Disruptions
- Connecting to Resources
- Neurodevelopmental Disorders
- Crisis Intervention and De-escalation
- Active Listening
- Juvenile Suicide
- The Family Experience

Crisis Intervention Teams for Youth: T3

NCYOJ hosts CIT-Y train-the-trainer (T3) events to build state and local capacity to cost-effectively train officers as needed. Local trainers are also best equipped to incorporate local data and context allowing agencies to tailor portions of the curricula.

- The T3 is a 2.5 day course led by a small pool of select clinical and juvenile justice master trainers.
- T3 participants typically include law enforcement officers and behavioral health staff.
- The T3 blends lecture, discussion, demonstrations, exercises, and videos to engage adult learners.
- T3 participants cultivate familiarity with the curriculum and complete training demonstrations for feedback from their peers and the master trainers.

Contact NCYOJ! ncyoj@prainc.com | (866) 962-6455 | ncyoj.policyresearchinc.org

Endnotes

1 Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention. (2017).
2 Shufelt & Cocozza. (2006).

3 Brown, Robert A., Kenneth Novak, and James Frank. (2009).
4 Skowrya, K. & Cocozza, J. (2007).