NAMI St. Louis Trains the 7,000th Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) First Responder

St. Louis, MO., January 25, 2023 -- NAMI St. Louis is pleased to announce that we have trained the 7,000th first responder in the St. Louis region during the program’s 20 year history.

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is a 40-hour course that trains law enforcement and other first responders on how to effectively respond to an individual experiencing a mental health crisis. “During the 40-hour program this week, we will train our 7,000th officer,” NAMI St. Louis’ Director of CIT Programs Kyle Dooley said.

The CIT program started in St. Louis County in 2002 and trained its first officer in 2003. Dooley continued, “In the 193 CIT courses NAMI St. Louis has coordinated, officers learn de-escalation skills and how to connect individuals in crisis with appropriate community resources in an effort to divert involvement with the criminal justice system.”

“An added benefit to the CIT program,” according to Sgt. Patrick Hokamp, Crisis Intervention Unit Coordinator for St. Louis County Police Department, “is improved safety for both the first responder and the individual in crisis.”

CIT teaches officers the tools to be able to recognize the difference between behaviors related to a mental health crisis and those related to criminal behavior, thereby reducing unnecessary involvement with the criminal justice system. CIT curriculum includes basic information about mental health disorders and their symptom presentations, specific de-escalation techniques, and increased awareness of the impact of personal biases related to the stigma surrounding mental health disorders, race, and other factors, as well as the role of trauma for all involved in these encounters.

NAMI St. Louis is a local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness; the largest grassroots mental health organization in the country. We coordinate CIT for four CIT Coordinating Councils within the St. Louis region (St. Louis, Great Rivers, Jefferson County, and Franklin County).

The CIT program is a collaboration between NAMI St. Louis, regional Community Behavioral Health Organizations, local hospitals, schools, Children’s Division, and Juvenile offices. The partnership also includes all County and Municipal law enforcement agencies located in St. Charles, St. Louis, Lincoln, Warren, Jefferson, and Franklin counties as well as the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

Please go to www.namistl.org/cit for more information about the St. Louis Area CIT program.

Mission: We provide education, advocacy, and support essential to the recovery, resilience, and well-being of all who have mental health needs and for their families, caregivers, and the community.

For more information, press only:
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