



From Wellness to Response: Creating Stronger Crisis Systems
The Hershey Lodge
October 26, 2026 – Day 1

8:30 a.m.

Registration

Welcome and Opening Remarks

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

- *Kirsten Kenyon, Executive Director, PCCD*
- *Jennifer Lopez-Cerrato, Chairperson, MHJAC*
- *Representative Michael Schlossberg, 132nd Legislative District*
- *PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Changing Perspectives Through Lived Experiences

- *Kate Hooven, Justice System Project Coordinator, ASERT*
- *Ryan Hooven, Justice System Training Supporter, ASERT*

When Ryan was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the age of four, his mother, Kate, knew very little about autism beyond its portrayal in the film *Rain Man*, in which Dustin Hoffman plays Ray, a middle-aged autistic man. Ryan did not look, communicate, or behave like the character she had seen on screen, leading Kate to believe he could not be autistic—a conclusion that, at the time, brought her a great sense of relief.

Keynote

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

As Kate began researching autism and comparing what she learned with the traits and behaviors she observed in Ryan, she discovered that many of his characteristics aligned with what she was reading, despite differing significantly from Hollywood's portrayal. Months after that initial search, and just weeks before his fifth birthday, Ryan received an official Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. Although Kate knew her life had changed forever, she could not have imagined the profound personal and professional journey that lay ahead.

Together, Kate and Ryan will share their unique perspectives on how Ryan's autism diagnosis shaped both of their lives. Ryan will offer insight into what it feels like to experience the world differently and

how those differences are often misunderstood or misinterpreted by others. Kate will reflect on how Ryan's diagnosis transformed the way she viewed the world and inspired her to help others see it through a more informed and compassionate lens.

As Kate learned to move beyond her fear and misconceptions surrounding "different," she was finally able to truly see Ryan and support him in ways that made him feel understood, valued, and safe. Through their shared story, Kate and Ryan invite participants to gain a deeper understanding of autism, challenge long-held assumptions, and develop greater empathy for those whose experiences may differ from their own. Their presentation will leave you with practical insights that will help you become not only a more effective CIT officer, but also a more compassionate and understanding person.

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Lunch

The Power of Listening

- *Kevin Berthia, Suicide Survivor & Advocate*
- *Kevin Briggs, Speaker, California Highway Patrol, Ret., Guardian of the Golden Gate Bridge*

This keynote will focus on two topics: individual wellness and crisis communication. The inherent strain of the daily work environment can lead to many stress-related issues. This keynote tackles this head-on and provides important information on how to reduce stress. Attendees will also gain knowledge on self-assessment and self-care.

Keynote

12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Mental illness calls have escalated dramatically in recent years, yet staff trained to handle these calls remain low. The deadly use of force by officers generally occurs when a subject is in the throes of a mental health crisis. This course is intended to provide a solid foundation for individuals pursuing the latest efforts in crisis negotiations when dealing with those suffering from mental illness.

Suicides continue to rise each year throughout the world. The main factors leading to suicide will be discussed, as well as elements that can reduce suicide. Knowing the signs and how to converse with an individual who may be in crisis will be thoroughly discussed. Kevin Briggs and Kevin Berthia utilize actual case studies coupled with years of training and experience to serve as a guide when instructing.

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

First Set of Breakout Sessions

The Transformation of Pennsylvania's Crisis Walk-in Centers

- *Steven Ross, Crisis System Specialist, PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- *Jill Stemple, Director, Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Program Development, PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

Join staff from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to hear about the transformation of Pennsylvania's Crisis Walk-in Centers in preparation for the new revised crisis regulations coming soon.

Officer Wellness & Resilience: Building Sustainable Mental Health Practices in Public Safety

- *Katherine Gruver, CIT Coordinator/Mental Health Boundary Spanner, York County Department of Probation Services*
- *Erin O'Donnell, MSW, Wellness Manager/ CIT Coordinator, Philadelphia Police Department*

Philadelphia County and York County are partnering to bring this important session focused on the mental, emotional, and physical wellness of law-enforcement officers, emphasizing practical strategies to reduce burnout, increase resilience, and support long-term well-being. Participants will explore evidence-based wellness models, peer-support frameworks, stress-management techniques, and organizational policies that promote healthier work environments. The session also addresses the impact of trauma exposure, compassion fatigue, and high-stress operational demands, offering tools agencies can implement immediately to strengthen officer wellness culture. Designed for leadership, frontline officers, and wellness coordinators committed to improving safety and retention within their departments.

Strengthening Rural CIT: Innovations, Challenges, and Community-Centered Solutions

- *Sarah Davis, CIT Coordinator, Armstrong/Indiana BDHP*
- *Tiffany Rex, Community Outreach & CIT Coordinator, Carbon Monroe Pike Mental Health & Developmental Services*
- *Cori Seilhamer, CIT Coordinator, Franklin/Fulton MH/IDD/EI*

Rural communities across Pennsylvania face unique circumstances that shape how CIT programs develop, operate, and sustain themselves. This session brings together rural practitioners to explore the diverse factors influencing CIT effectiveness in small and remote counties—ranging from limited behavioral health resources and long travel distances to steering committee engagement, coordination across justice and human service systems, and the

practical realities of rural crisis response. Presenters will highlight recent progress, innovative local approaches, and lessons learned from counties navigating geographic, cultural, and infrastructure barriers. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the complexities facing rural CIT programs and leave with practical strategies to strengthen collaboration, enhance crisis response systems, and support rural communities.

Session Title: Breaking the Cycle—A Collaborative Response to Mental Health High Utilizers

- *Sean Justice, Senior Policy Analyst, Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *Rachel Lee, Project Manager, Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *Ernest Stevens, Deputy Division Director, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

Law enforcement agencies across the country are seeing a small number of individuals account for a disproportionate share of mental health-related calls for service, emergency detentions, hospital transports, and officer time. Traditional crisis response models often result in repeated encounters without addressing the underlying behavioral health and social service needs that drive these recurring crises. This breakout session will explore an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to identifying and supporting mental health high utilizers through proactive outreach and cross-system collaboration. Using San Antonio's Program for Intensive Care Coordination (PICC) as a foundational model, participants will learn how law enforcement, behavioral health providers, EMS, hospitals, and community organizations can work together to reduce repeat crisis contacts while improving outcomes for individuals living with serious mental illness.

5:00 p.m.

End of Day 1



From Wellness to Response: Creating Stronger Crisis Systems
The Hershey Lodge
October 27, 2026 – Day 2

7:30 a.m.

Registration/Continental Breakfast

Welcome and Day 1 Recap

8:30 a.m. – 8:35 a.m.

- *Kirsten Kenyon, Executive Director, PCCD*
- *Jennifer Lopez-Cerrato, Chairperson, PCCD MHJAC*

8:35 a.m. – 8:50 a.m.

CIT TAC Update

- *Council of State Governments Justice Center*

Plenary Session: Are You the Fire in the Room, or the Room on Fire?

- *Jason Adams, Firefighter, Township of Upper Providence*

Keynote

8:50 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.

First responders and members of the military are trained to run toward the problem. They rely on their training, experience, and instincts to make decisions under pressure because that's what they've always known. But what happens when the problem is no longer what they're responding to? What happens when the responder who's spent a career helping others becomes the response? Through his own experiences, Jason Adams will share what happened when the training and coping mechanisms he had relied on for years were no longer enough, and why so many struggle to ask for help when they need it most. He doesn't have all the answers. His hope is to encourage honest conversations, challenge the stigma surrounding mental health, and remind everyone that strength isn't measured by how much we can carry alone.

10:05 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

10:15 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.

Second Set of Breakout Sessions

Where You Are: A Practical Guide to CIT Data Collection

- *Emily Rogers, Research Project Manager, Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *Chelsey Wright, Research Analyst, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

This session introduces the Pennsylvania CIT Data Framework, developed by the CSG Justice Center as part of the Pennsylvania CIT Technical Assistance (TA) Center. Across the state, data collection remains one of the most cited challenges for CIT programs — counties want standardized tools and shared definitions, but most are still tracking information in scattered spreadsheets with no common system or consistent terms across agencies. This session aims to give counties guidance on how to engage partners in meaningful data collection and what specific metrics to track to assess program performance. Attendees will leave with a working understanding of the CIT data framework and the core data elements it recommends; strategies for cross-agency data collection and reporting; an introduction to data dictionaries and why shared definitions matter for cross-agency consistency; and a plan for where to begin reporting in the near term, and how to phase in additional data collection over time.

Pathway to Excellence: CIT Program Certification and York County's Platinum Journey

- *Marianne Halbert, JD, Programs Manager, CIT International*
- *Katherine Gruver, CIT Coordinator/Mental Health Boundary Spanner, York County Department of Probation Services*

CIT International provides CIT programs the opportunity to receive certification through structured assessment and feedback, identifying strengths and opportunities. By completing the certification process, CIT program leadership demonstrates their commitment to best practices of crisis response system development. Learn more from CIT International and hear from York County about their experience having received Platinum Certification.

Building Stronger Crisis Response Systems: Co-Responder & Embedded Social Worker Models in Action

- *Darryl Andreas, Mental Health Co-Responder, Lycoming Regional Police Department*
- *Devon Chianos, Deputy Chief Co-Responder, Dauphin County District Attorney Office*
- *Nicole Martin, Director of Learning & Practice, The Lincoln Center for Family & Youth*

Across Pennsylvania, law enforcement agencies and behavioral health partners are advancing innovative co-responder and embedded social worker programs to better support individuals experiencing mental health, substance use, and social-complexity related crises. This panel will highlight diverse models from counties implementing police-based and behavioral-health-based approaches, discuss strategies for launching and sustaining programs, and explore lessons learned from real-world collaboration. Presenters will share insights on partnership development, responding to high-utilizer populations, and strengthening community trust while improving diversion, de-escalation, and crisis outcomes. Attendees will come away with practical considerations for building or enhancing their own co-responder initiatives.

Beyond Traditional CIT: Specialized Programs Across Pennsylvania

- *Erin O'Donnell, MSW, Wellness Manager/ CIT Coordinator, Philadelphia Police Department*
- *Bobby Tanyer, Adult BH Program Specialist/CIT Coordinator, Westmoreland County Office of Behavioral Health*
- *Nicole Wolf, Bucks CIT Coordinator/Director of Education and Training, Lenape Valley Foundation*

Join representatives from three counties across Pennsylvania as they present their specialized CIT programs - CIT Advanced, Youth CIT and Veteran Response Teams. This session will showcase successful practices, specialized training approaches and collaborative strategies that enhance law enforcement's response to individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. Participants will gain valuable insights into diverse program models and practical approaches that can be adapted to meet the needs of their own communities.

11:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

2026 Statewide CIT Conference Awards

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- *CIT Officer of the Year*
- *CIT Behavioral Health Practitioner of the Year*
- *CIT Coordinator of the Year*
- *CIT Pin of the Year*

Plenary Session: It's OK to Not Be OK: The Asher Model for Officer Wellness

- *Ernest Stevens, Deputy Division Director, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

Keynote

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

This keynote introduces the Asher Model, a seven-point framework born from tragedy and built for action: Awareness, Solution-Focused Approach, Peer Support, Resiliency, Healthy Habits, Spirituality, and Family. Rather than another conversation about the problem of officer suicide and burnout, this session offers a practical, proven roadmap for building a genuine culture of wellness, one where "it's OK to not be OK," where struggling is met with resources instead of stigma, and where agencies commit to their people from the academy through retirement. Attendees will leave with a clear, actionable blueprint for normalizing honest conversations about mental health within their agency; shifting from awareness alone to sustained, solution-focused action; building peer support structures that officers actually trust and use; strengthening resiliency through mindfulness, education, and early intervention; and extending wellness efforts to the families who serve alongside every officer.

2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Closing Remarks