

2025 Statewide Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Conference

CIT and Beyond

AGENDA

Tuesday, October 28, 2025



9:00 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- *Kirsten Kenyon, Executive Director, PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency*
- *PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- *Jennifer Lopez-Cerrato, Chairperson, Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee*
- *Samantha Cossman, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator, PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs*

Keynote

9:25 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.

Pennsylvania Crisis Intervention Team Training and Technical Assistance Center

- *Kirsten Kenyon, Executive Director, PCCD*
- *Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *CIT International*

Keynote

9:40 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.

Heart of the Badge: Building Resilience Through Wellness in Policing

- *Chad Bruckner, Active Duty Police Officer, Motivational Speaker, Author, Coach*

This 60-minute keynote session examines the critical intersection of officer wellness and effective policing. Facilitated by Chad Bruckner, an active-duty police officer, distinguished speaker, performance coach, author, and former Army combat leader, the session integrates authentic storytelling with evidence-based strategies to enhance mental and emotional resilience. Drawing from his extensive experience in law enforcement and military service, Mr. Bruckner explores how prioritizing wellness fosters professional excellence and personal well-being. Participants will engage with practical tools, including mindfulness techniques, peer support strategies, and self-leadership principles, through a dynamic, non-PowerPoint format that emphasizes narrative, reflection, and interactive discussion. Attendees will leave more equipped to cultivate resilience, strengthen team connections, be an effective storyteller, and thrive in the demanding field of policing. For additional resources, visit Motivate-Change.com.

10:40 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

10:55 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

First Set of Breakout Sessions

Foundations First: Launching Effective Crisis Intervention Team Programs

- *Michele Saunders, Strategic Partnership Coordinator, CIT International*
- *Devon Chianos, Deputy Chief Co-Responder, Dauphin County District Attorney Office*
- *Tracy Small, CIT/CISM Coordinator, Centre County*

Starting a Crisis Intervention Team program can feel overwhelming—but with the right guidance and partnerships, communities can build a strong foundation for effective crisis response. This breakout session is designed for jurisdictions in the early stages of CIT development or those considering implementation. Participants will learn the core components of the CIT model, including stakeholder engagement, training design, protocol development, and community mapping. Presenters will share step-by-step guidance, lessons learned from recent implementations, and tips for avoiding common pitfalls. The session will also highlight how to tailor CIT to the unique needs and resources of your community, especially in areas with limited mental health infrastructure. Whether you're just beginning conversations or preparing to launch, this session will provide the tools and confidence needed to take the first steps toward a safer, more compassionate crisis response system.

Social Work & Law Enforcement: A Collaborative Approach

- *Sgt. Todd Granger, Lancaster City Bureau of Police*
- *Kelly Haines, Social Worker, Lancaster City Bureau of Police*
- *Grace Mentzer, Social Worker, Lancaster City Bureau of Police*

A significant percentage of officers' time is spent responding to calls that are non-criminal in nature. This session will explain how Police Social Workers (PSWs) embedded in Lancaster City Bureau of Police collaborate with officers to respond to these calls. PSWs are able to address the underlying needs that result in repeated calls for service. Having PSWs can reduce the time spent on calls by officers, increase access to treatment or other resources, and bridge the gap between the community and police. Presenters will discuss how the PSW program was implemented, challenges, and future initiatives.

Current Veteran Response Teams in Pennsylvania

- *Erin O'Donnell, MSW, Wellness Manager/ CIT Coordinator, Philadelphia Police Department*
- *Major Dennis Brian Basmajian II, Philadelphia VA Medical Center Police Compliance Officer*
- *Police Officer Kenneth Harper, Philadelphia Police Department*
- *Matthew Allen, Director of Veteran Affairs, Bucks County*
- *Anna Trout, Crisis and Diversion Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Office of MH/DD/EI*
- *Sgt Anthony Sawl, Butler County Sheriff's Office*
- *Christie Lucas, LCSW, VJO Coordinator, Butler County*

Every day, police officers across Pennsylvania encounter Veterans in crisis. To better support this population, several counties have launched specialized Veteran Response Teams, uniting law enforcement officers who are also Veterans to respond with understanding, empathy, and shared experience. This session will explore the development and impact of these teams across Bucks, Butler, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. Learn how this two-day training equips officers with the tools to assist fellow Veterans in the field and how it's fostering support and resilience within the law enforcement community itself.

Bridging Behavioral Health and Public Safety: How Counties are Leveraging "Stepping Up" to Enhance their Crisis Response Efforts

- *Audra Goldsmith, Project Manager, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

Counties across Pennsylvania are leading the way in transforming responses to individuals with behavioral health needs through strategic partnerships and innovative practices. This panel will spotlight Stepping Up Innovator Counties in PA that are leveraging their local Stepping Up Initiative to uplift and sustain successful models of CIT and co-responder programs. Panelists will highlight the significance, benefits, and operational dynamics of collaboration between behavioral health professionals and law enforcement officers. Through local county examples, attendees will gain valuable insights into the challenges encountered, lessons learned, and measurable outcomes—such as reduced arrests, improved access to behavioral health services, and strengthened cross-sector partnerships. Whether you're just beginning your Stepping Up journey or seeking to enhance your county's crisis response strategies, this session will offer practical guidance and inspiration to advance your efforts.

12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Lunch

1:10 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

2025 Statewide CIT Conference Awards

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

1:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Second Set of Breakout Sessions

Evolving the Model: Advanced CIT Program in Pennsylvania

- *Ernest Stevens, Deputy Division Director, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *Katherine Gruver, CIT Coordinator/Mental Health Boundary Spanner, York County Department of Probation Services*
- *Cori Seilhamer, CIT Coordinator, Franklin/Fulton MH/IDD/EI*
- *Tracy Small, CIT/CISM Coordinator, Centre County*
- *Maria Watts, Deputy Sheriff, Allegheny County Sheriff*
- *Nicole Wolf, Director of Education and Training, Lenape Valley Foundation*

As communities and crises grow more complex, Crisis Intervention Teams must evolve beyond foundational training to address emerging behavioral health challenges. This advanced breakout session is designed for experienced CIT practitioners, leaders, and stakeholders seeking to elevate their programs to the next level. Participants will explore strategies for addressing officer wellness, advanced and scenario-based training, use of force, special populations, and data-driven decision-making. Through in-depth discussion and peer exchange, attendees will leave with practical tools and innovative ideas to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of their CIT programs.

Expanding the S.C.O.P.E. of Law Enforcement-Community Partnerships

- *Corporal Todd Kessler, Bucks County Sheriff's Office*
- *Deputy Salvatore Lamantia, Bucks County Sheriff's Office*
- *Dr. Christi M. Smith, President & CEO, Smith & Lesson, LLC.*
- *Deputy Justin Sturkey, Bucks County Sheriff's Office*

Police spend a disproportionate amount of time addressing issues related to substance use, mental health, and poverty. Despite the long history of police working with social workers to address community problems, the shift toward co-responder programs, diversion and police-led deflection models have been slow to progress. The purpose of this session is to provide an overview of an innovative approach being used in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The Sheriff's Community Outreach and Public Engagement - S.C.O.P.E. - initiative is designed to assist the citizens of Bucks County that may be experiencing a mental health crisis, need help with addiction, need assistance connecting to treatment, are experiencing homelessness, and may need assistance with handling court matters.

Transforming Crisis Intervention: A Systems Approach from Pennsylvania's Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

- *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*
- *Dan Trego, Senior Program Manager, PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

In recent years, the need for an equitable, person-centered, and responsive behavioral health crisis system has become increasingly urgent. Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), is at the forefront of this transformation—reimagining crisis intervention as a foundational component of the broader behavioral health continuum. During the breakout session, attendees will hear from OMHSAS staff about Pennsylvania's statewide efforts to align its crisis response system with national best practices, including the integration of 988, the expansion of mobile crisis teams, Emergency Behavioral Health Walk-in Centers, Crisis Stabilization Units, and the strategic use of funding streams to support sustainable services.

Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative: The Expansion

- *Lauren Diller, Strategic Initiatives Officer, PA Office of Attorney General*
- *District Attorney Heath Brosius, Snyder County*
- *District Attorney Brian Kerstetter, Union County*
- *Wesley Thomas, Deputy Administrator, CMSU Behavioral Health & Developmental Services*

The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General is pleased to announce the expansion of our Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative (LETI) into serving our behavioral health community in participating counties. LETI is a diversionary program in Pennsylvania, aimed at diverting nonviolent, low-level offenders away from the Criminal Justice system and into treatment and/or services by our partners in law enforcement. Together with Columbia, Montour, Snyder, and Union Behavioral Health, attendees will learn about the existing program created to help those with a substance use disorder (SUD) and be the first public forum to learn about the behavioral health expansion that encompass those with mental health, behavioral health, intellectual disabilities and autism diagnose/ies and/or symptoms.

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Afternoon Break

Keynote**3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.****CIT and Community Collaboration**

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

During this session, Ernest Stevens will explore the critical role of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and the development of effective policies, emphasizing collaboration with community stakeholders. He will also share how the San Antonio Police Department created its mental health unit. Additionally, Ernie will discuss how to launch a co-responder team, methods for collecting and sharing data, and key strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability of these programs.

4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**Day 1 Wrap-Up****4:30 p.m.****End of Day One**

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Wednesday, October 29, 2025



8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Welcome and Day 1 Recap

- *Kirsten Kenyon, Executive Director, PCCD*
- *Jennifer Lopez-Cerrato, Chairperson, Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee*

Keynote

8:45 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Understanding CIT Best Practices for Your Program

- *Marianne Halbert, JD, Programs Manager, CIT International*

The Memphis Model consists of 10 Core Elements to improve crisis response systems. During this keynote, attendees will learn how "Core Element 2: Community Ownership - Planning, Implementation & Networking" provides a framework that creates an identity for *your* community's CIT program.

Keynote

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Mason's Mom: A Parent's Journey Navigating Brain Injury

- *Teresa McCloskey*
- *Megan Davidson, Program Director, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

Teresa McCloskey shares her family's journey after her son Mason suffered a traumatic brain injury as an infant. She highlights the medical, behavioral, and social challenges Mason faced during childhood and adulthood, including mental health diagnoses, difficulties in school, legal troubles, and gaps in community services. Teresa discusses strategies that helped her family navigate these ongoing hardships and emphasizes the importance of compassion, individualized support, and understanding for survivors of brain injury and their families.

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

First Set of Breakout Sessions

Building Effective CIT Programs in Rural Pennsylvania

- *Joe Barnhart, CIT Coordinator, Crawford County Human Services*
- *Dennis Marsili, CIT Program Personnel, Crawford County CIT Committee*
- *Barb Vanaskie, CIT Coordinator, West Branch Drug and Alcohol Commission*

Rural communities across Pennsylvania face unique challenges in behavioral health crisis response, including limited resources, geographic isolation, and strained emergency services. This breakout session will explore effective strategies for developing and implementing CIT programs in rural counties. Participants will learn how to build strong partnerships between law enforcement, behavioral health professionals, and community stakeholders to improve crisis response outcomes. Topics will include training adaptations for rural departments, leveraging telehealth and mobile crisis units, overcoming stigma, and accessing funding opportunities.

Intersecting Paths: Diversion and CIT in Berks County

- *Kristy Belschwinder, Forensic Diversion Program Manager, Connections Work*

This session explores how Berks County integrates Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) principles with diversion strategies to reduce criminal justice involvement for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. Participants will learn how local partnerships between law enforcement, mental health providers, and community agencies create effective alternatives to arrest, strengthen public safety, and connect people to care. The session will highlight Berks County's model, key outcomes, and lessons learned that can be applied in other communities.

Huntingdon County Endangered and At-Risk Youth Response Team

- *Chief Charles T. Streightiff, Huntingdon Borough Police Department*
- *Kirsten C. Streightiff, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment for Grades 6-12, Mount Union Area School District*

The mission of the Huntingdon County Endangered and At-Risk Youth Response Team (HEART) is to create an early warning "handle with care" alert between Law Enforcement, Children and Youth Services, and local school districts to provide timely and valuable information about concerned youth that otherwise would go undetected and unreported. HEART works to collaboratively combine the expertise and resources of multiple professionals, agencies, and communities to improve interventions for children and families.

Mind Matters: Building a Crisis System That is Inclusive and Responsive to Brain Injury

- *Megan Davidson, Program Director, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*
- *Kate Reed, Director of Forensic Systems Solutions, Family Training & Advocacy Center*

It is estimated that over half of individuals encountering the criminal justice system have experienced a brain injury, many of whom also have co-occurring mental health needs, making this an important issue of concern for those involved in crisis response services. The Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG) conducted an extensive review, involving a series of interviews and focus groups with criminal justice and brain injury experts on this topic to inform policy and practice at a national level. This presentation will outline key findings from this review and discuss key considerations and guidance for professionals in the crisis response space responding to and intervening with people with a brain injury in the field.

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Break and Transition to Breakout Sessions

1:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Second Set of Breakout Sessions

Developing a CIT Youth Program

- *Devon Chianos, Deputy Chief Co-Responder, Dauphin County District Attorney Office*
- *Tiffany DeMarchi, Children's Program Specialist, Westmoreland County Office of Behavioral Health*
- *Jordan Rolko, Co-Responder, Dauphin County District Attorney Office*
- *Bobby Tanyer, Adult BH Program Specialist/CIT Coordinator, Westmoreland County Office of Behavioral Health*
- *Nikki Weigand, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, NAMI Keystone PA*

While youth and trauma are not typically at the forefront of CIT trainings, this CIT-Y is specifically designed to cover these topics and give all attendees and systems a better understanding to become a more well-rounded crisis responder. The youth crisis intervention team training program (CIT-Y) is designed to equip law enforcement officers, first responders, school personnel, mental health professionals and community members with the skills and knowledge to effectively respond to youth in crisis. The program emphasizes de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed approaches, and collaborative strategies to ensure positive outcomes for young people facing emotional, behavioral, or mental health crisis.

Better Together: When Social Workers and Police Join Forces for a Stronger Community

- *Cara Gadzinski, Human Service Co-Responder/Training Coordinator, Bucks County*
- *Ivone Kovalsky, Community Engagement Officer, Bucks County*
- *Chief Nelson E. Whitney, II, Falls Township Police Department*

In 2020, Bucks County launched its first Co-Responder Program at the Bensalem PD. Since then, it has expanded to 24 PDs. This presentation will focus on the implementation/expansion of the CR program in Bucks County and feature a case study from Falls Township PD (who adopted the model in its early stages) in hopes of inspiring attendees to explore CR initiatives to improve public safety, enhance MH outcomes, and better navigate complex social issues.

Mental Health Meets Law Enforcement: Collaboration for Resilient Policing

- *Julie Knudsen, Director of Development, The Lincoln Center for Family & Youth*
- *Nicole Martin, Trauma Training Manager, The Lincoln Center for Family & Youth*
- *Detective Stephen Sowell, Norristown Police Department*

This presentation demonstrates the impact of mental health and law enforcement collaboration in training on trauma, resilience, and connection within teams. By blending expertise, this approach equips officers with tools to navigate trauma, build resilience, and foster a work culture that supports officer retention and wellness. Attendees will explore how these partnerships promote trauma-informed justice practices that benefit both officers and the communities they serve.

CIT and Crisis Services Workgroup Action Planning

- *Sean Justice, Senior Policy Analyst, Behavioral Health Division, Council of State Governments Justice Center*

This is a closed session open only to members of the CIT and Crisis Services Workgroup. Building on recent research into current PA crisis responses, this workgroup will take the next step by converting the findings into action. Attendees will engage with the Crisis System Assessment's recommendations to generate an Action Plan that thoughtfully encompasses the current needs of PA. The workgroup will prioritize current recommendations and utilize national best practices and policies to generate achievable, actionable next steps for the PA Crisis System.

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Closing Remarks

3:00 p.m.

End of Conference