

Understanding Crisis Intervention Teams



If you have a mental health condition, you know that some days are harder than others. For those times when you may be a danger to yourself or to those around you, a crisis intervention team (CIT) can help. You may hear a CIT called by different names, like a crisis response team (CRT) or behavioral health response team, depending on the community.

A CIT is a group of mental health professionals who are trained to help a person going through a mental health crisis. CITs also partner with people who have a mental health condition and their families. They can advocate for those living with similar issues.

What is a mental health crisis? It's more than just feeling especially down on any given day. It's when your actions, feelings, or behaviors put you at risk of hurting yourself or others.

If you are having a mental health crisis, call or text 988 or 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) right away. You will be connected to trained counselors who are part of the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). An online chat option is also available. This service is free and available 24/7.

Instead of 988, you or another person you know might call . In communities with CITs, trained mental health specialists will respond instead of a police officer. .

You're in safe hands with CITs. They are there to help communicate between you and local law enforcement so that you get the help you need.

How do CITs work?

CIT members are trained in how to manage mental health crises in the safest way possible. The team can include specially trained law enforcement officers, mental health providers, and medical and addiction professionals.

CITs can help in many situations. They might respond to:

- A suicidal crisis
- Psychotic episodes
- Severe anxiety or panic attacks
- Substance-related crises

How will a CIT know to come to you?

When a call comes in about a mental health crisis, the CIT is sent out.

First, the CIT assesses the scene. Then, they might try to de-escalate the situation and calm everyone down. Once everything is under control, the CIT decides how best to help.

In many cases, CITs will connect you with outpatient services at a facility best suited for your needs. This might include an addiction treatment center or a mental health clinic. If your crisis is very serious, they might take you to an emergency mental health facility.

Why are CITs so important?

CITs don't just help 1 person at a time. They serve the community as well. CITs can:

- **Cool down heated situations.** CITs are experts at resolving emergency situations. They make sure everyone is safe. They are there to help you feel better.

- **Reduce hospital visits.** CITs can connect you with resources to help you find treatment. If you have an addiction, they'll help set you on the road to recovery. This may mean fewer hospital visits over time.
- **Provide ongoing support.** CITs will put you in touch with ongoing care after your crisis.

While CITs are an important part of the mental healthcare system, not all areas have them. To find out if you have a CIT nearby, call your local police department or law enforcement agency.

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