

# **OSF Saint Anthony's & Alton PD Host First-Ever Local Crisis Intervention Training**

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**ALTON** - A cooperative effort between OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center and the Alton Police Department has led to a new community health initiative to address the mental health needs not only in the Riverbend region, but in communities throughout Madison County.

55 attendees encompassing first responders (police, fire, EMS), health care professionals, and county government representatives participated in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) held on February 27-28 - specifically geared toward those individuals responding to a mental health crisis situation - with the ultimate goal being to get people the help they need rather than criminalize the mentally ill.

“The CIT program is a true collaborative endeavor that brings community partnerships closer together to address a vital community health need,” says Jerry Rumph, President, OSF Saint Anthony’s. “Specifically from a hospital point of view, CIT provides an opportunity for hospital staff and first responders to team up and work cooperatively in treating individuals with mental health illnesses – as well as protect those individuals responding to mental illness crisis situations.”

Funded through a grant from the Madison County Mental Health Board, the CIT program provides an opportunity to help participants on their journey to being integral in the development of the community health ecosystem of care in Alton. It is designed to address the complex mental health needs of local and county residents.

“Our goal is to successfully develop, implement, and maintain a true co-responder model within the communities we serve,” says Jarrett Ford, Chief of Police, Alton Police Department. “This isn’t a one-time occurrence, we plan on holding quarterly CIT sessions so that we can continuously enhance our knowledge and skills.”

Among the Individuals attending one of two 1-day sessions in late February included representatives from (but not limited to):

- OSF Saint Anthony’s
- Alton Memorial Hospital
- Gateway Regional Medical Center
- Alton Police Department
- Alton Fire & Rescue
- SIU School of Medicine
- Madison County Health Board

CIT training programs, certified by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training & Standards Board (ILETSB), were first conducted in April 2003. CIT programs, in part, focus on:

- An overview of mental illness signs and symptoms
- Challenging the stigma of mental illness
- De-escalation strategies in dealing with difficult individuals

The CIT sessions held at OSF Saint Anthony's were facilitated by Dr. Tracey Smith, DNP, PHCNS-BC, MS, Director of Community Health and Programs at Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA), and Mark Benson, NCC, LCPC, CIT Regional Coordinator-Central and Southern Illinois Regional Coordinator, NSE Solutions, LLC.

“Through CIT, we want to focus on solutions in a manner that addresses all of our needs; for example, to develop a co-responder approach,” says Dr. Smith. “The benefits of a CIT program include 1) reducing the likelihood of injuries to those responding to a mental health crisis situation, 2) improving community relationships, and 3) decreasing the amount of CIT calls in a community.”

Overall, CIT programs lead to community health ecosystems that pull together cross sector teams that improve community connections through the development of large diverse community mental health teams. “CIT allows us to address system-related challenges and identify what opportunities exist to strengthen and integrate behavioral health services,” says Dr. Smith.