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Improving police response to persons with mental illness: A multi-level conceptualization of CIT

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Abstract

The large numbers of people with mental illness in jails and prisons has fueled policy concern in all domains of the justice system. This includes police practice, where initial decisions to involve persons in the justice system or divert them to mental health services are made. One approach to focus police response in these situations is the implementation of Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT). The CIT model is being implemented widely, with over 400 programs currently operating. While the limited evidence on CIT effectiveness is promising, research on CIT is limited in scope and conceptualization-much of it focusing on officer characteristics and training. In this paper we review the literature on CIT and present a conceptual model of police response to persons with mental illness that accounts for officer, organizational, mental health system and community level factors likely to influence implementation and effectiveness

of CIT and other approaches. By moving our conceptualizations and research in this area to new levels of specificity, we may contribute more to effectiveness research on these interventions.



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