

CIT Newsletter

Portland Police Bureau's Crisis Intervention Team

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Outstanding CIT Work

These are just a few actual occurrences of sergeants and officers using skills, compassion and patience to deliver effective responses to those in a mental health crisis.

Officer Jim Sandvik

On 07-05-03, it was Transit Officer Jim Sandvik, who was called upon to use his CIT skills. He and his partner, Ofc. Kris Barber, were flagged down while they were at the Skidmore Fountain, and were told there was a man on the Burnside Bridge who was threatening to jump. When Ofc. Sandvik approached the man, he warned Ofc. Sandvik to stay back or he would jump. The man told the officers that he knew this was a shallow section, and that he wanted to hit the rocks. Ofc. Sandvik was able to start a conversation and got his name and a brief idea of what motivated his actions. When the man changed his position on the bridge, Ofc. Sandvik and Sgt. Westbrook successfully pulled him off the bridge. By talking with the subject, Ofc. Sandvik managed to calm him down, and because the man no longer viewed Ofc. Sandvik as a threat, Ofc. Sandvik was able to close the distance, and take him into custody.

Sgt. David Steele and Officer Spencer Sheldon

East Precinct Sgt. David Steele, CIT, and Officer Spencer Sheldon were faced with a man who threatened to kill himself with a shotgun. It was 08-06-03, and Ofc. Sheldon arrived at the apartment complex and made contact with the man by using the man's roommate's cell phone. Ofc. Sheldon spoke with him for about 10 minutes, and then turned the phone over to Sgt. Steele. Using his CIT skills, Sgt. Steele was able to calm the man and get the subject to surrender without either harm to himself or others. Once inside the apartment, three shotguns were found, which shows that it was not a threat to be taken lightly. The man was taken to the hospital on a hold.

Sgt. Robert Voepel

On 08-10-03, several officers were dispatched to the Burnside Bridge after a man called 9-1-1 and threatened to jump. When officers responded, the man ran off of the bridge and into Old Town. Sgt. Robert Voepel, who is CIT trained, responded to the second call and calmed the subject. The man explained why he was on the bridge and told Sgt. Voepel that he had ongoing mental illness issues and had just been released from jail. Sgt. Voepel maintained an open dialogue, and convinced the man that a trip to the hospital would help him sort out his problems. By being persistent and continually talking to him, Sgt. Voepel de-escalated the situation. The subject agreed to be transported to the emergency room.

Officer Matthew Stimmel

On 08-12-03, Officer Matthew Stimmel, and most of the afternoon shift, got called to the area of NW Couch and 10th, to meet with a woman who said her distraught boyfriend was climbing to the top of a construction crane to jump. The officers saw the man nearly at the top of the crane, about 15 stories above the street. He had taken off his shirt and was going into rapid mood swings. Ofc. Stimmel began to talk to him about why he was there, and that his loved ones would miss him if he killed himself. The man told Ofc. Stimmel that he had run out of medication in September of 2002. It took about 90 minutes talking to him to convince him to come down and get some help. He was taken on a hold to Good Samaritan.

Officer Hank Hays

A final example of great CIT work happened in Central Precinct. On 11-06-03 there was a stand-off in the parking lot of the OHSU/VA Hospital. Officer Scott Westerman had been in the area on an unrelated case, when he became aware of a man with a gun in the parking structure. Ofc. Westerman arrived and called for cover. Officer Hank Hays (CIT) came to the scene. Inside a car was a man with a .40 caliber Beretta handgun

pointed at his chest. Ofc. Hays used his PA system to try and talk the man into dropping the gun. After 20 minutes, the man put the gun down and indicated that he was willing to surrender. After the man surrendered, he was taken into custody and placed into the VA hospital by a doctor's hold. The area surrounding this incident had to be contained and the vehicular and pedestrian traffic was cut off to prevent anyone from wandering into the standoff. This entire incident was a coordinated effort on the part of OHSU public safety officers, VA Hospital police officers, and Central Precinct.

Family Services has moved

The Family Services Division has moved to 10225 E. Burnside, at the Childrens Receiving Center. The new number for the CIT Coordinator is 503-988-6413. The pager number remains the same, as 503-940-3090.

CIT in the United Kingdom

Several months ago Sgt. Jon Dowd from the United Kingdom came over to the U.S. to gather information on Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs. Sgt. Dowd recognized that the CIT model was a good step forward for the Police Service (what law enforcement is called in Britain).

Sgt. Dowd recently put together England's first CIT class. The class taught command staff and street officers how to better interact with people in a mental health crisis. An article in a national magazine for United Kingdom police officers called, Jane's Police Review, featured Sgt. Dowd talking about CIT. In the August 2003 edition, an article titled "All in the Mind" appeared. The following is an excerpt from the article as Sgt. Dowd describes what CIT is to his fellow officers:

"Crisis intervention training does not try to turn officers into mini psychologists or psychiatrists, but aims to provide frontline officers with the knowledge and skills required to deal appropriately with mental health sufferers or those experiencing and emotional crisis."

Sgt. Dowd is working on a Fulbright Commission Police Fellowship and hopes to add more training, which would incorporate more skill building than the current training allows.

Secured Transport

Cascadia is now in the final stages of organizing a Secured Transport Program. This would enable them to accept voluntary people and involuntary holds in a caged car, which would reduce our workload. The initial hours are projected to be 1400-2200, Monday to Saturday.

There will only be one car at the beginning of this program, with more cars added as the call volume increases. The two people in the car will have soft restraints and will be trained on how to use them.

Project Respond will be calling and arranging for this service. The Secured Transport Program is pending a final review by the State of Oregon. If, at any time, the secured transport car is not available, then we will handle the call as per our normal procedures.

CIT Statistics

Statistics listed below are from reports received in August, September, and October of 2003.

CIT Statistics

	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Bureau-Wide CIT calls	161	176	150
Directors Holds	38	37	24
Involuntary Holds	54	60	54
Voluntary Transports	22	32	24
Project Respond Onscene (Bureau Wide)	38	44	33

CIT Related calls by Precinct

	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Central	41	40	42
Southeast	49	46	35
Northeast	41	37	18
East	25	33	26
North	18	16	23

Next issue in March

Please contact Ofc. Paul Ware (503-988-6413) or Marsha Palmer (503-823-0283) with suggestions for articles. The CIT newsletter is published six times per year by the Planning and Support Division, Portland Police Bureau Chief Derrick Foxworth and Mayor Vera Katz. Address is 1111 SW 2nd Ave., Room 1552, Portland, Oregon, 97204. FAX 503-823-0289. Web address: www.portlandpolicebureau.com.