

The Record Courier. "Crisis Training Program Adopted in Portage County." Accessed September 18, 2007. www.recordpub.com.

Crisis training program adopted in Portage County

The Portage County Chief's Association has adopted the Crisis Intervention Team Training coordinated by the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County as a countywide program.

"We've seen the results of the training as officers have reported successes in dealing with residents who have mental illness or substance abuse problems," said Chief Seth Riewaldt of the Aurora Police Department, chairman of the Chief's association. "The training gives us a tool that increases the safety factor for both the police officer as well as the person in crisis."

The Mental Health & Recovery Board introduced the CIT program in April 2006. There are 68 officers trained. Every police department in the county and the Portage County Sheriff's Department has staff trained through CIT.

A new CIT class starts Sept. 24. The training is free to departments through grants from the Mental Health & Recovery Board and support from NAMI Ohio.

CIT is a national training program designed to provide law enforcement officers with comprehensive education and skill for working with residents who have a mental illness or mental retardation.

The local program draws from a collaboration among law enforcement, the Mental Health & Recovery Board and its network of agencies, mental health and recovery professionals, the National Alliance on Mental Illness Portage County, people who are receiving services for a mental illness and family members.

"The training focuses on practical techniques for de-escalating crisis. Officers learn to integrate their police training with some different approaches to a person they believe has a mental illness," said Dennis Missimi, director of special projects for the board and CIT coordinator.

Missimi has recruited a number of professionals to sit on the program's advisory committee. They include Brimfield Police Chief David Blough, Portage County Municipal Court Judge Barbara Oswick, Det. Greg Francis of Ravenna Police, Portage County Common Pleas Magistrate Kelli Perk, Capt. Michelle Lee of Kent Police, Lt. Roy Mosley of Streetsboro Police, Officer Jeff Futo of Kent State University Police, Officer Kathy Glass of Kent Police, Dr. Jennifer Teller of Kent State University, Dr. Joel Mowrey of Children's Advantage, Sandy Myers and Becky Dempster of Coleman Professional Services, Tracy Deep of Family and Community Services and Deborah Neuhart of Townhall II. The late attorney Jon DeRhodes of Kent was a founding member of the advisory committee.

The chief's association is encouraging departments to establish their own internal CIT programs headed by a coordinator. The coordinator will assist with calls that involve people in crisis, serve as a departmental liaison with mental health and recovery agencies and participate in a CIT coordinator's county network.

CIT coordinators include: Glass, Futo, Francis, Officer Andy Suvada of Streetsboro Police, Investigator Michelle Nevling of Hiram Police, Sgt. Bill Reese of Brimfield Police, Sgt. John Bergoine of Aurora Police and Officer Ross Moore of Brady Lake Police.

Portage County Commissioners have supported the program through a grant from the National Association of Counties. A gift was received from Joel and Kathy Presti of Aurora. Family and friends of DeRhodes also contributed to the program in his memory.