



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 30, 2023

## **ST. CHARLES COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS TRAINING**

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – Law enforcement officers often encounter a myriad of issues while on duty in the community, including individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. These people often need immediate attention and assistance in situations which can include harm to themselves or others. St. Charles County ensures its officers are prepared to respond by making crisis intervention training a priority.

Staff in the St. Charles County Police Department, Sheriff's Department, and Department of Corrections receive that training through Crisis Intervention Team, or CIT, programs. This training helps them recognize and verbally de-escalate situations involving a mental health crisis and instructs them how to connect people with local mental health treatment resources. CIT training is a week-long course, with instruction provided by organizations including the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Eastern Missouri Police Academy, National Institute of Corrections, and other local organizations.

"We look for opportunities to schedule officers for CIT training on a regular basis," says St. Charles County Police Sergeant Dan Asher, the Police Department's CIT coordinator. "The goal of CIT is to divert individuals from police interaction into the care they need, rather than causing harm to themselves or others, or ending up incarcerated."

A recent [study](#) by the American Psychological Association found that at least 20 percent of police calls for service involve a mental health or substance use crisis.

"CIT training increases safety and reduces injuries, both for officers and for those with mental health and substance use disorders," says Lieutenant Eric Gremminger, the CIT coordinator for the St. Charles County Sheriff's Department. "It expands officers' skills and reduces the amount of time spent on CIT calls. It also increases community confidence in law enforcement when those situations are handled well."

Sgt. Asher and Lt. Gremminger both note that an important aspect of CIT training is an emphasis on forming partnerships with family members and community health care providers. Working together and sharing information between those stakeholders enables positive outcomes. County law enforcement agencies partner with Compass Health Network in Wentzville to connect patients with voluntary mental health crisis treatment.

When an individual needs to be taken to jail because of criminal actions, CIT training is an important tool for jail staff and helps maintain a safe and orderly environment, says Jonel Coleman, Suicide Prevention and Compliance Administrator for the Department of Corrections. At least 36-40 percent of inmates suffer from a serious mental illness, Coleman notes, and approximately 80 percent have either a substance use disorder or another mental health problem.

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“It’s imperative that Corrections officers are educated on mental health and trauma, because we manage these people every day,” states Coleman. “CIT training provides better recognition of issues and results in Corrections officers taking an extra beat to de-escalate before resorting to other measures. It is important to us that inmates suffering from mental illness receive the care they need while in our custody and in the community.”

Law enforcement administrators also note that while the primary CIT training course is a one-time, week-long course, refresher courses and specialized versions of CIT training are available, which officers are regularly encouraged to attend.

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### ***About St. Charles County:***

*St. Charles County, Missouri, founded in 1812, is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri. With a population of 405,262, it is the state’s third largest county. It is home to 22 scenic county parks of which three are in reserve, encompassing 4,509 acres.*

*With one of the largest economies in the state, St. Charles County is home to multinational companies including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.*

*St. Charles County Government has more than 1,170 employees in more than 30 departments and offices who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit [sccmo.org](http://sccmo.org).*