

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Crisis Response and Intervention

What's the Problem?

Police may be called to public places or homes to handle crisis situations created by individuals with drug or alcohol problems, abusive behavior, or mental illness. Currently, these situations often lead to criminal charges instead of addressing the underlying causes with treatment.

First responders need crisis intervention training in order to better assure safety, appropriate de-escalation, less lethal consequences and opportunities for treatment. The possible services available in each county may not be familiar to responders and may even be hard to discover when searching for resources.

What's one Solution?

Some states, such as [Virginia](#), have made concerted state-wide efforts to train Crisis Intervention Teams that combine police and mental health professionals to help de-escalate crisis situations and divert people to social services such as drug/alcohol treatment, mental health evaluation and treatment, or to counseling or mediation. Training these teams, providing extra personal, and funding social service programs can have a substantial cost, but have proven to be cost effective in the long run because of improved functionality of individuals in their families and communities, and the reduced costs to the state related to crime and incarceration.

MAJR supports the formation of a strong Crisis Intervention Team program in Maryland. Along with mental health organizations such as [NAMI](#) and [MHAMD](#), MAJR supports improved training for law enforcement and first responders to recognize mental illness and be familiar with diversion options. We believe such efforts would reduce the number of people being placed in jails and prisons who are primarily in need of treatment or services that could improve their ability to be functional and to contribute.

In particular, MAJR is supporting three 2020 bills: SB 305/HB 607 *Establishing the Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention*; SB 454/HB 1470 *Mandatory Mental Health Training - First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers*; HB 332/SB 441 *Emergency Facilities List - Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers*.

Do Crisis Intervention Teams work?

Some Maryland counties and Baltimore City have already started Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT). The city was under a consent decree to analyze what was better needed in the city to respond to crisis situations relating to mental health and produced a [Gap Analysis](#). The Baltimore Police Department CIT curriculum has been based on national best practice models, such as the [Memphis model](#). The training consists of 40 hours focused on mental health, including de-escalation techniques and hearing from individuals with lived experience, with the goal of diverting individuals with behavioral health disabilities from the criminal justice system.

Other programs for assistance or treatment of people in crisis situations vary significantly depending on county. Among the types of assistance programs that exist in some Maryland counties are: drug/alcohol abuse programs, mental

health treatment programs, domestic violence/abuser programs, anger management programs, parenting classes, employment training, homeless services, veteran's services, victim-offender mediation, family mediation, restorative justice programs, and prostitution prevention programs.

Learn More!

Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy "Study on Alternatives to Incarceration"

http://msccsp.org/Files/Reports/Alternatives_to_incarceration_Jan2018.pdf

NAMI's National Public Policy Document: [https://www.nami.org/getattachment/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Public-Policy/Public-Policy-Platform-December-2016-\(1\).pdf](https://www.nami.org/getattachment/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Public-Policy/Public-Policy-Platform-December-2016-(1).pdf)

Baltimore Public Behavioral Health System Gap Analysis, Final Report, December 2019

<https://www.baltimorepolice.org/baltimore-public-health-system-gap-analysis>

Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, *Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders Gaps and Needs Analysis*, December 31, 2016.

Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Project, Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program Grant, 2017.

NAMI Maryland, Johns Hopkins School of Education, and Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, *Summit Report Course Correction: Collaboration of Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Advancing New and Proven Models for State and Local Government*, 2017

National Conference of State Legislatures, "[The Legislative Primer Series for Front End Justice: Mental Health](#)," August 2018.

Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, *More Mentally Ill Persons are in Jails and Prisons than Hospitals: A Survey of the States* (May 2010).

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) *Crisis Intervention Training*: <https://www.mhamd.org/crisis-intervention-training/>, 2019

The University of Memphis, School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, *Crisis Intervention Team Core Elements*, <http://www.citinternational.org/resources/Pictures/CoreElements.pdf>

Nov 2019 Symposium in Baltimore: *The Case for Crisis Response*, <https://disabilityrightsmd.org/decriminalizing-disability-the-case-for-crisis-response-in-baltimore-city/>

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan association of over fifty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.