

## ***The difference between CIT and CISM – they are NOT the same***

We are all cops – we love our acronyms: SWAT, CIT, SRB, SRT, CISM, FUBAR, CSSU, CSU, OSU, FOP, IPA, CWC, HSRO, PAT, COC, CRT, EMW, DMW, TFO, CIRT, and more. Half the time I wonder if we, let alone someone outside of LE, understand what they all mean. I know for a fact that two of these get confused and conflated often: *CIT versus CISM*.

CIT stands for **C**risis **I**ntervention **T**eam - CISM stands for **C**ritical **I**ncident **S**tress **M**anagement. Many agencies in Central Ohio have CIT-trained officers in their departments and ALL agencies in Central Ohio have access to the Mid-Ohio CISM Team; but what and who are they? That's what I am going to discuss in this month's article.

I reached out to the local CIT guru, Commander Chris Bowling of CPD, who referred me to several government and private websites that discuss CIT and its goals. Crisis Intervention Teams are made up of street-level first responders who have become generalist/specialists. While continuing to handle general, patrol-related calls for service, they have received additional training to make them specialists when responding to service calls involving persons who are in mental health crisis. The officers undergo special training to engage, assess, and resolve situations for people who are feeling overwhelmed with life's 'normal' issues.

While that sounds very similar to CISM-trained officers, CIT officers are NOT given the privilege of protected speech in their work that is afforded to CISM officers and are not trained in handling the unique aspects of critical incident stress and trauma. Both sets of officers are trained in crisis-resolution skills, de-escalation techniques, and other specialized functions; both sets of officers are exceptional, dedicated, and can complement one another in their work, but their skills are targeted to different populations.

One of the primary goals of CIT members is to divert citizens in crisis away from the jail system when appropriate and into locations where they can receive behavioral health care. Here in Central Ohio, citizens in crisis are often referred to NetCare Access, a "24 hour mental health and substance abuse crisis intervention, stabilization and assessment for Franklin County residents," as listed on their website. Most police officers know them by the addresses, 741 E. Broad St on the short east side or 199 South Central Ave in Franklinton (or the Bottoms for those of us who are not using the new PC-term). NetCare operates a 24-hour crisis line (614-276-CARE) and intake center that all officers, but especially CIT-trained officers, utilize to help citizens in mental health crisis.

CIT officers may make referrals to specialized Mental Health Dockets in the State, a new and expanding area of criminal justice meant to divert those in mental health crisis away from the criminal-punishment aspects and into a more treatment-minded setting.

CISM-trained personnel on the Mid-Ohio CISM Team are police officers, dispatchers, clergy, chaplains, and mental health workers who are given specialized training through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) to assist officers and their families who are in crisis. CISM members of *any* CISM-trained team are there to help mitigate, assist with, and accelerate recovery from traumatic stress, prevent police suicides, and restore and maintain emergency services personnel's health; they are afforded special protections under the Ohio Revised Code. There are other teams in Central Ohio for not only police officers, but also firefighters, medics, LifeFlight personnel, dispatchers, etc.

Our CISM target audience is you, the active or retired police officer, firefighter, dispatcher, or medic who is feeling the accumulated, or acute, stress of a lifetime in emergency services. We are not mental health counselors, but we are people who have been there, done that, seen that, and lived through it. We are willing to listen, to talk, to make referrals, and to let you know that it is ok to feel stress at times!

We, as police officers, are exposed to situations and events that would be considered "extraordinary" by many people's standards and we become accustomed to many of these events as we learn and perform our jobs. There is a natural "desensitization process" that takes place, which allows us to continue working in our chosen field; this is normal and natural, without such we could never continue to function. There will, however, still be events that occur which are overwhelming for even experienced emergency service personnel. Such events have been called "critical incidents" and vary from person to person; no one reacts exactly the same to the same event and that is where a CISM-trained team comes into play.

The bottom-line is that CISM-trained teams are there for our peers – for police officers and their families. Trauma and stress affect all those around us, not just the cop, no matter how hard we try to shelter our friends and family from our jobs and the inherent stress that it brings.

CISM, just like CIT, is the first-step in the road to recovery – our services are just directed towards different populations.

If you would like more information on CISM please check out our website: [www.ipa-usa.org/CISM](http://www.ipa-usa.org/CISM)

If you would like more information on CIT I recommend: <http://cit.memphis.edu/>

Take care and **BE SAFE!!**

*Steve*