

**Award:** Harry J. Baker Community Service Award - 2018

**Recipient:** CIT Officers and Correctional Officers

**Presenter:** Bruce Barnard

It is an honor to be asked to present this award to Crisis Intervention Team Officers on behalf of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers.

My background is in substance abuse and mental health services. In those fields we have a concept called "no wrong door." Because mental illness and the disease of addiction carry stigma and often shame, a community can have no wrong door to ask for help. No door that does not provide a compassionate response and linkage to care.

Persons struggling with mental illness are seen in the criminal justice system at disproportionate rates. While persons with mental illness are no more likely to be violent than the general population, we all know law enforcement interactions can end tragically, for the person with a mental illness, for bystanders and family, and for the responding officer. Nationally, there are more than 2 million annual jail bookings involving a person with a mental illness. The largest provider of mental health services in Illinois is the Cook County Jail. Here in Champaign County, we know that 25-30% of the people booked into our jail need further assessment and many need behavioral health treatment, assistance in obtaining health benefits, housing, and other community services. CCHCC's Chris Garcia provides benefit assistance at the jail.

In Champaign County we are fortunate to have a coordinated effort among law enforcement jurisdictions to respond to persons with behavioral health problems.

Community Service Award – CIT Officers

More than 100 law enforcement and corrections officers have participated in Crisis Intervention Team Training. This is not something they are required to do, this is something they have chosen to do in order to better serve their community.

Crisis Intervention Team training is a five day course for law enforcement and corrections officers covering issues such as the signs and symptoms of mental illness, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders, autism and intellectual disabilities, psychotropic medications, post traumatic stress response as well as issues faced by the elderly, returning veterans, children, and adolescents. The training includes de-escalation strategies to respond effectively to persons experiencing a mental health crisis and an introduction to local treatment resources.

The Sheriff and the Chiefs of Police in Champaign, Urbana, Rantoul, the University of Illinois, and Parkland College all support CIT training for officers. A cross-jurisdictional agreement ensures that a CIT trained officer is available to respond at all times in the county. A dispatcher can request a CIT Officer or the 911 caller can make the request.

In Champaign County there are about 150 calls each month for a CIT trained officer. CIT calls often take longer and require more assessment and problem solving. The most frequent calls are those related to suicide attempts or suicidal ideation. The calls may involve transporting someone to the hospital for evaluation, voluntary admission, or commitment, the call may be resolved at the scene, and yes sometimes there is no choice but to make an arrest. Which is why it is important that we have CIT trained correctional officers at the jail.

There is no doubt that the commitment of these officers and the training they have received has saved lives, prevented unnecessary incarcerations, and provided linkage to community services for thousands of individuals and families in Champaign County.

A law enforcement or corrections officer cannot say "this is someone else's job"; whatever the problem or situation, they have to find a way to deal with it, and deal with it using the community resources available. They need our help. As community providers and advocates for healthcare we owe it to these officers to ensure that when they respond to someone with behavioral health needs, that the community stands behind them with the health, behavioral health, housing, and advocacy services needed to meet those needs.

When I became involved in Justice and Mental Health Collaboration work in Champaign County, I began looking at recidivism statistics and service gaps. Frankly, it can be a bit depressing. But when we started to meet with stakeholders and explore opportunities to do better, I was encouraged by the compassion and professionalism of law enforcement, corrections officers, treatment providers, and community advocates. A quick thanks to Claudia Lennhoff, Chris Garcia, Brian Tison, and Karee Voges who served on that steering committee. As I began to look at the resources we had in the community including CIT, jail-based services, and community providers, I was reminded of something Mr. Rogers said (he often spoke to kids with messages we need to hear as adults), when you feel overwhelmed by a tragedy "look for the helpers, find those who are trying to help." This award is well-deserved. Every officer who has made a commitment to receive Crisis Intervention Team

Training and the leadership supporting their efforts have earned our gratitude. They are the helpers.

If I may single out the Jail Superintendent Captain Voges for just a moment. When I talk to my colleagues across the country, few have been as fortunate as we have been to have a willing partner at the County Jail. It has been a privilege to work with her in our efforts to reduce the jail population, recidivism, jail-based services and linkage to community based services. Those efforts led to our county receiving national recognition as an innovator county by the Council of State Governments, American Psychiatric Association, and National Association of Counties for our work on jail-based screening and services. There is much work yet to be done. But today, let's take a moment to thank these fine officers for their commitment and compassion.

It is my privilege to present you all with CCHCC's Harry J. Baker Community Service Award. Thank You.