



## Major Sam Cochran (ret.) CIT International, Co-Chairperson

Communities large and small are seeking to discover better and more efficient crisis response services. When changes are mandated, community collaborations and partnerships are critical deployment ventures to ensure success. Advocates have long asserted law enforcement personnel often do not understand and sometimes do not receive adequate mental health training. Within the hearts of many are desires and passions to move forward into new layers of crisis skills and services and beyond hurtful more traditional pathways of the past. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is the new awakening – **More Than Just Training**.

In 1988, Memphis introduced the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) as a result of tenacious advocacy efforts from local NAMI members. NAMI voices challenged questionable law enforcement mental illness crisis response services and tactics. After a 1987 law enforcement shooting event, NAMI voices spoke: **“Can’t we (community) do better?”** – Was their cry and plea. The Memphis community looked to leaders to develop, and implement a new approach (a new beginning was the demand). CIT partnerships commenced as a new community exploration was thrust forward. NAMI persisted in steering new educational messaging and pathways that were uncompromising – mental illness is a brain illness and respect and dignity are necessary for hope and recovery. From this “heartbeat” CIT breathed a unique identity – **CIT is more than just training**. CIT foundational pillars support many attributes and principles: human dignity, understanding, kindness, hope and dedication are but a few. The processing and understanding of CIT requires visions beyond traditional training ways and efforts. Yes, improved training made a difference; but with new partnerships came a new awakening of an identity (CIT) which transcended to ‘Ownership’ – thus sustaining CIT as a Community Program.

Major Sam Cochran (ret.) is nationally known for his work developing the CIT model. He was the Coordinator of the Memphis Police Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) which started in 1988 from an outpouring of community partnerships. He holds a master’s degree in Political Science and Criminal Justice from the University of Southern Mississippi. He retired from the Memphis Police Department after 33 years of service which include numerous assignments including Coordinator of the Memphis Hostage Negotiation Team. Retiring in 2008, Major Cochran joined the University of Memphis as a CIT Project Grant Coordinator and as Coordinator of the CIT Center. Major Cochran is passionately engaged in many services promoting CIT as a community program – more than just training. In addition to receiving the City University of New York (CUNY) John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement News Person of the Year Award (2000), the National Alliance on Mental Illness named an annual law enforcement advocacy award after Major Cochran.

Major Cochran is currently serving within several roles: Chairperson for CIT International presenting the Crisis Intervention Team model to numerous organizations and communities, including presentations on national public radio stations, CBS Television 60 Minutes II and at the White House Conference on Mental Health. Major Cochran has also written or contributed to articles that have appeared in several publications: [Responding to Youth with Mental Health Needs: A CIT for Youth Implementation Manual](#) and [The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, Community Mental Health Report and Psychiatric Services and Address Discrimination and Stigma Center \(ADS Center\)](#).

Major Cochran continues in various training and consulting services: (1) Shelby County Sheriff Training Academy Instructor (CIT and Mental Illness) (2) CIT Verbal De-escalation Trainer and CIT Community Coordinator Trainer, and (3) assist and engage communities to visualize and capture the “more” of CIT – beyond traditional limitations of “textbook” training.

Major Cochran’s passion manifests from tenacious advocacy and efforts to reduce unnecessary incarcerations, injuries and deaths of those who struggle and cope with mental illness. CIT is not a panacea, but is a necessary start for our future – promoting excellent services with hope and dignity. CIT is the calling by which to embrace and capture a new “heart” – yes, **CIT is “MORE” than just training**.