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For Immediate Release April 7, 2020

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## **Model Criminal Justice Division Program Certifies First Round of Programs**

Having recently launched a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program certification process, CIT International is pleased to announce the certification of the first group of CIT programs.

The CIT model was first developed in 1988 in response to a deadly law enforcement incident involving a man experiencing a mental health crisis who was shot and killed by a Memphis police officer. Much more than a 40-hour training, CIT is a collaborative community-policing model that enables communities to be better equipped to respond to individuals experiencing mental health crises. Since its inception, CIT has grown into a national best practice. The purpose of certification is to identify and reward those programs operating with fidelity to the model.

*“Now more than ever, it is important to acknowledge and support communities that are using the CIT model to improve their crisis response system, prepare law enforcement officers to assist when needed, and connect people experiencing crisis to appropriate care as early as possible,”* stated Dr. Amy Watson, President, CIT Board of Directors.

There are thousands of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs operating across the United States, Canada, and other countries. CIT is a recognized best practice community policing model that diverts individuals living with behavioral health disorders from criminal justice system involvement. Support from government and foundation partners has provided the funding necessary for communities to implement CIT programs.

**CIT International Inc’s Executive Director, Ron Bruno is pleased to announce that the following programs have earned national certification: CIT Maine State Program; Central Valley CIT Regional Program, AZ: CIT Berrien County Regional Program, MI, and Lenexa, Kansas Police Department CIT Agency Program.**

CIT International urges local and state leaders to acknowledge this impressive accomplishment and the significant commitment of behavioral health professionals, law enforcement officers and mental health advocates that has led to international certification.

Executive Director Ron Bruno explains, *“CIT programs that undergo the certification process will not only receive certification but will also receive a*



*summary report and feedback. Together, the certification and summary report allow a program to identify its strengths and opportunities. CIT program administration can also utilize the report to garner further support to advance crisis response system reform. By completing the certification process, CIT program leadership demonstrate to their community an understanding of CIT programming being more than just training and their commitment to best practices of crisis response."*

CIT International's 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Detective Sabrina Taylor, is the Phoenix Police Department CIT Training Coordinator and serves on the Steering Committee for the Phoenix Regional CIT program. The Regional program was very proud of its certification and, as part of a joint press release with its partner organizations, the Phoenix Police Department shared, "We have partnered with the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) to work with community stakeholders as part of a CIT program since 2001. Mercy Care has been one of our most important partners in RBHA since 2014. Together, Mercy Care, Tempe Police and Phoenix Police Departments are proud of the work we continuously push for the betterment of our community. "

Maine was the first New England state to implement the CIT model. The CIT Maine program has over 50 participating departments across the state, and currently operates as the only CIT program in the entire state. "Implementing CIT program standards is difficult work. It requires meaningful collaboration, the willingness to hold all partners accountable, and a community-wide investment to divert individuals experiencing behavioral health crises away from the criminal justice system whenever possible," states Jenna Mehnert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of CIT International's board of directors, and former CEO of NAMI Maine. "By increasing resources and building specialized skills, CIT changes how communities respond to individuals respond to people in crisis, thereby preventing the criminalization of mental illness. Police leadership and specialty law enforcement officers willing to do the extra work necessary to implement this invaluable community policing model, should be acknowledged for their commitment." Mehnert added.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the CIT Movement, please consider attending our annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona this August. To learn more visit: [www.citinternational.org](http://www.citinternational.org).

If you would like to start the certification process for the CIT program in your community, please visit: [www.citinternational.org/citprogramcertification](http://www.citinternational.org/citprogramcertification)

Additional Media Contacts:

More information about each of the newly certified programs can be obtained by contacting the individuals listed below:

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**State Program:** Jenna Mehnert, Led implementation/certification process for CIT Maine, [jenmehnert@hotmail.com](mailto:jenmehnert@hotmail.com)