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Abstract

The objective of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of Crisis Intervention Teams in diverting the mentally ill from the criminal justice system and reducing the rates of problematic interactions. A systematic review of studies conducted to assess the impact of this policy on stated outcomes indicates that the policy is an effective means of educating law enforcement on mentally ill individuals, diverting mentally ill individuals from the criminal justice system, and reducing problematic encounters.

Introduction

There is a significant number of mentally ill individuals incarcerated in the United States. Prior to the 1960s, mental health contacts and intervention by law enforcement were not a significant part of the policing profession. However, as a result of the deinstitutionalization movement in American society, a significant number of mentally ill individuals became homeless and experienced crises of mental health. With a broken mental health system unable to respond, the police became the first responders to the mentally ill (Crisis Intervention Team Inc., N/A).
- Historically, as many as 7–10% of US police contacts have involved persons with mental illnesses, with a disproportionate amount of these encounters resulting in arrest, usually for minor offenses (Borum & Franz, 2011).
- Crisis Intervention Teams(CIT) were established with a primary goal to reduce the risk of serious injury death during an emergency interaction between police officers and persons with a mental illness (Binder, McNiel, Rogers, 2019).
Crisis Intervention Team training covers a variety of topics including; mental health first aid, the mental health system, safe de-escalation techniques, suicide assessment and prevention, and mental health and the law (Northeastern Pennsylvania Crisis Intervention Team, N/A). The goal is to train police officers on how to properly recognize, de-escalate, and assist an individual with a mental illness on a crisis call so that they are not harmed or arrested and transferred to the criminal justice system.

Studies Demonstrating Effectiveness

- After police officers undergo CIT training, they feel more capable of providing a safer and more humane response when responding to a crisis call (Ritter, Teller, Munetz & Bonfire, 2010).

- Fewer individuals with mental illnesses were arrested when the officer had CIT training than any other jail diversion models that were examined when the disposition encounters were examined for nine different law enforcement agencies in Central Florida (Borum & Franz, 2011).

Studies Demonstrating Ineffectiveness

- No significant difference in the use of force towards mentally ill individuals between officers with CIT training and those without it (Compton, 2014).

- While some studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the program in diverting the mentally ill from arrest and increasing officers' efficacy and knowledge in interactions with the mentally ill, other studies have found that the program produces insignificant results in some outcomes (Caro, 2017).

Summative Analysis

While the majority of studies found Crisis Intervention Teams effective in diverting the mentally ill from the criminal justice system and reducing rates of problematic interactions, other studies do not support the findings of Crisis Intervention Teams effectiveness.

Studies that supported effectiveness of Crisis Intervention Teams found that the program increases the diversion of the mentally ill from arrest and increasing officers' efficacy and knowledge in interactions with the mentally ill.

Studies that do not support Crisis Intervention Teams effectiveness found that Crisis Intervention Teams are ineffective as a result of barriers to implementation.

Conclusions

Overall, the research regarding the effectiveness of this program has been supportive of the policy's impact on increasing officer preparedness, which allows them to feel more capable of providing a safer and more humane response when responding to a crisis call.

In order to address the issues involving police interaction with mentally ill individuals, Crisis Intervention Teams(CIT) were established with a primary goal to reduce the risk of serious injury death during an emergency interaction between police officers and persons with a mental illness (Binder, McNiel, & Rogers, 2019). The goal is to train police officers on how to properly recognize, de-escalate, and assist an individual with a mental illness on a crisis call so that they are not harmed or arrested and transferred to the criminal justice system.

Crisis intervention training is a sane criminal justice policy that is utilized within some law enforcement agencies.

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