



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 520, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2100 FAX: (831) 454-3420

SUSAN A. MAURIELLO, J.D., COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

Date: February 14, 2017
Contact: Jason Hoppin
Communications Manager
831-454-3401

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO BEGIN CIT TRAINING

In a continuing effort to improve service to individuals with mental health issues, law enforcement agencies within Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency and the National Alliance on Mental Illness are pleased to announce a new training program to help law enforcement officers safely interact with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

The Crisis Intervention Team effort is modeled after a successful system developed in Memphis, Tenn., and will provide a comprehensive, three-day multidisciplinary training course certified by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to local law enforcement officers and mental health professionals. The goal is to increase the safety of encounters and divert individuals from the criminal justice system to mental health care.

“In the last 10 months, my deputies responded to nearly 1,700 calls for service involving people experiencing a serious mental health crisis,” Sheriff Jim Hart said. “This training will give local law enforcement personnel the tools they need to help resolve these encounters safely and successfully. I want to thank the Health Services Agency and NAMI for their partnership on this project.”

More than half of the individuals in U.S. prisons and jails suffer some sort of mental illness. The use of Crisis Intervention Team training has expanded with an increasing focus on the dangers to law enforcement officers and individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

“I appreciate the commitment of the various law enforcement agencies, County mental health staff, as well as the advocacy efforts of members of our community that put together this program and make it a reality for our County,” said Erik G. Riera, Director of Mental Health and Substance Use Services for the County of Santa Cruz. “This training ensures that officers in the field are equipped with the tools that they need to effectively work with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. This program demonstrates the effectiveness of strong partnerships in improving services for all of our County residents.”

Training will include disorder-specific instruction, perspectives from individuals who have suffered mental illness and their families, and information on addressing specific types of encounters, including those involving veterans and children. The training is made possible with the support of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency.