

# Law Enforcement Response to Individuals and Families in Crisis

## Crisis Intervention Teams

Police officers frequently encounter people with mental illness on patrol, oftentimes in crisis situations. As you can imagine, the skill set required to handle these crises appropriately differs from more traditional law enforcement techniques. A program for mental health awareness and de-escalation training for police officers was first developed in Memphis during the 1980s and is known as Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT).

Here is a good overview of [Crisis Intervention Teams](#).

Through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), NAMI NH began training police officers throughout the state of New Hampshire in 2019. SAMHSA recently extended this grant and so New Hampshire police officers and first responders will continue to receive this training for the foreseeable future.

Here is a [description of New Hampshire's CIT program](#).

## Responding in the Wake of a Suicide

Additionally, NAMI NH's Connect Program has been providing Suicide Prevention and Postvention training and consultation to law enforcement officers for almost 20 years to offer a comprehensive, systemic approach to suicide prevention and proactive coordinated response to sudden traumatic loss utilizing evidence informed strategies.

This [video, called Both Sides of the Door](#), evolved from training that the Connect program was conducting with law enforcement around suicide postvention response. The Connect Program's Speakers Bureau of loss survivors (called Survivor Voices) shared their stories as part of the Connect Postvention training. This led to dialogue and a request from several law enforcement agencies to learn more about how police could better help loss survivors in the immediate aftermath of a suicide and reduce any iatrogenic effect caused by their procedures, such as the death investigation.

Responding to this request from law enforcement, NAMI NH's Connect team brought together first responders, suicide loss survivors, mental health representatives, and suicide prevention specialists to share experiences and an understanding of the impact a suicide death. While the focus was on the loss survivors, this round table discussion also revealed the impact on first responders. This process led to great insights and healing generated by compassion and a willingness to be open and vulnerable on both sides, and it helped to highlight the crucial need to support all who are involved in these tragic experiences.

As a result, protocols were developed, guided by loss survivors and first responders. Their perspectives and guidelines were integrated into the Connect training for law enforcement and first responders. Numerous workshops have been conducted since. This video was made as one illustration of the experiences and process that brought about a trauma informed approach to systemic change and healing through a greater understanding among all those involved in the moments after a suicide.

The Connect program continues to offer training, protocols and consultation around suicide prevention and postvention on an international basis, and is part of the orientation training for all new recruits for Law Enforcement and Department of Corrections at the NH Police Standards Academy.