

# **Police Crisis Intervention Training Evaluation**

## **St. Croix Valley NAMI**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

## **Pierce County CJCC**

**Criminal Justice Coordinating Council**

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## **Introduction**

Team Crisis consists of senior students Caitlin Finger, Hope Kinderman, and Nicholas Pues. The team's project was to create an effective evaluation of the Verbal De-Escalation Skills for Law Enforcement on Mental Health Crisis Calls class for the client, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the Pierce county Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. (CJCC)

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, was established by a small group of families in 1979. "Today, we are an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations, and volunteers who work in your community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need (NAMI, 2015)." NAMI advocates, listens, and leads by shaping the public landscape for people with mental illness and their families and the general public. The local NAMI affiliation is the St. Croix Valley NAMI and includes Pierce County and St. Croix County.

The local NAMI affiliate, St. Croix Valley NAMI, with Project Director Linda Flanders, organized and conducted a class for the Pierce County law enforcement officers because they wanted a safer environment for law enforcement and people in a mental health crisis, plus there was an increase in the number of emergency detentions and civil commitments in Pierce County. A civil commitment is the admission of a person into a mental health facility. An emergency detention is when a person is placed under the protection of mental health workers for a short period of time with two requirements: they are dangerous to themselves or others, and they are

mentally ill. The number of civil commitments depends on the amount of emergency detentions. The premise of the shorter, modified class was: “*would educating all officers in a rural area on de-escalation skills be an acceptable alternative rather than to try and create a specific CIT Team of a few officers who are very knowledgeable?*” The cost in time and money to train a rural team was deemed unfeasible by the CJCC and an alternative was sought.

The class was held at the River Falls Public Library and was held once a month from July 2014 to March 2015. The class was to train officers of Pierce County in verbal de-escalation skills to see if it will increase safety and help reduce the number of civil commitments. The class was four hours long and was based off of the forty-hour Crisis Intervention Training “Memphis Model” that is considered a *best practice*. The actual de-escalation skills came from the FBI’s crisis negotiation skills. The class featured a licensed psychologist at the beginning of the class to give a brief overview of three primary mental health categories and the potential for dual diagnoses. Dual diagnosis includes a mental illness along with a narcotic addiction. When this part concluded there were personal stories of people living with mental illnesses. After they spoke a CIT trained officer and CIT facilitator came in to teach the skill steps and spoke about the effectiveness of using the skills in the field with examples of actual situations. After this presentation concluded was the final part of the class, the role-play scenarios. The role-plays included specially trained actors who were brought in to react to words and cues that the officers said or portrayed using the skills that they just learned. There were also two locally produced videos that were used during the class: 1) Supported the mental health overview that the psychologist gave through lecture, and 2) A review of the de-escalation steps by watching an officer use them in a role-play scenario. The class also included a full color class manual for

officers containing all the class information that was covered in lecture, and a list of all local mental health resources.

The foundation of the class followed the basic outline of the **CIT Core Elements**, as close as possible. The first Core Element taken from CIT is **Ongoing Elements** which includes partnerships, community ownership, along with policies and procedures. The local class followed this outline by utilizing the Pierce County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), NAMI as the partner agency, Hudson Hospital-*Programs for Change*, storytelling from individual's family members, specially trained community actors, (Dan Bushman, Joe Roberts and Denise Baker) and CIT trained instructors. (St. Croix Sheriff's Department Sergeant Jeff Kennett and Project Director Linda Flanders) Another Core Element was **Operational Elements** which includes CIT: Officer, Dispatcher, Coordinator along with curriculum based off of the CIT training and mental health receiving facility visit. While there is no mental health facility in Pierce County, the local class met some of the Operational Elements goals with the help of Peter VanDusartz from the Hudson Hospital as the Mental Health Coordinator, Denise Hackel from NAMI as the Advocacy Coordinator, and the curriculum being modeled after the 40-hour CIT class. The CIT-trained officer and CIT facilitator taught the actual de-escalation steps. The last Core Element is **Sustaining Elements**. These include evaluation and research, in-service training, recognition and honors, and outreach. One way that the local class mirrored this Core Element was by recently having evaluations and research completed. The class also won two Wisconsin State awards: 1) Judge Joseph D. Boles and the CJCC won the 2015 Arts Wisconsin *Art in the Community Award*, and local NAMI affiliate President Denise Hackel won NAMI Wisconsin's 2015 award for *Outstanding Contribution to NAMI Wisconsin*.

## **Objectives**

For this project there were a couple main objectives that had to be met in order for the project to be successful. The objectives were based off of the expressed needs of the client and the responses of officers from the initial evaluation completed after they took the class.

The first objective was that a successful evaluation tool needed to be created. This was accomplished by pulling information from the old evaluations to base questions off of for the new follow-up evaluation. The new evaluation was made to give insight as to whether the class was long enough for the officers to retain information and apply it to their jobs.

The second objective was to conduct the evaluation so there was a representative population of officers participating so the data would be conclusive. Officers were interviewed in person or were asked to complete the evaluation via email in order to get the data that was needed. The data was then compiled to see how effective the class had been to the officers and to get feedback on how officers felt about the class layout.

The data for the project was collected by following those basic objectives.

## **Methodology**

The main focus was to be in contact with officers that were involved in Crisis Intervention Training; the plan was to do a longer survey then was given at the training. With the response back it would hopefully show if the class was successful or not. For the in-person interviews and email surveys there were only five police and sheriff departments in Pierce County that were interviewed or surveyed.

For the surveys there were opportunities to do some in-person interviews otherwise surveys were emailed to officers. The first option was to do in-person interviews, because doing

in-person would give us a sense of whether or not the officers were really interested in the class or not. The in-person interviews were completed with the Spring Valley Police Department and Ellsworth Police Department. For the Spring Valley Police Department we were able to interview two officers and for the Ellsworth we were able to interview one person. So with the very few in-person interviews, it was decided to send out email surveys so there would be a better response back.

Email surveys were done with the River Falls Police Department and Prescott Police Department. The main email survey were done through the Pierce County Sheriff's department since there was such a large number of officers in this department, over half of the officers were able to email back with successful surveys. The data that was given has all been compiled and put into tally so a percentage could be taken and put into tables, which is shown in the power point. With the results from the in-person interviews and the email survey data could be collected and used to determine if emergency detentions and civil commitment have gone down since the classes have started and the officers were able to use the training in the field.

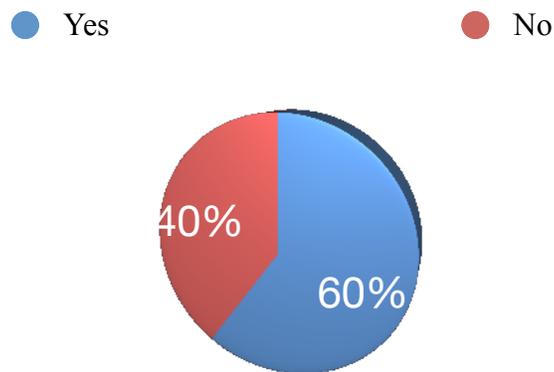
The information that was received for civil commitments and emergency detentions is from 2010-2014 in Pierce County. It shows that there were very high numbers of emergency detentions and civil commitments. With this training the plan was to hopefully lower these numbers and provide these people with other resources to live better then be sent to jail or metal institutions. There is not enough current data to show if the class has worked yet in bringing the number down for emergency detentions and civil commitments but hopefully there will be data soon.

## Results

The following data is compiled from the responses of officers from Spring Valley Police Department, Ellsworth Police Department and the Pierce County Sheriff's Department. Every officer was asked the same eleven questions from the evaluation and anonymously submitted their responses. Following are the questions asked that could have been answered in a "yes" or "no" fashion, along with the results.

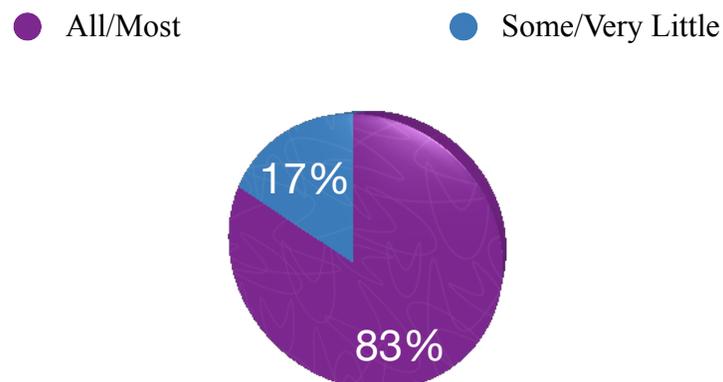
1. Have you tried the de-escalation methods in the field? If so, were they successful?

Yes-60 % No-44%



2. How much of the training did you retain?

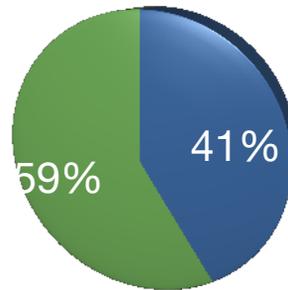
All/more- 83% Some/Very Little-17%



3. Have you looked back at the material to stay refreshed?

Yes- 41% No- 59%

● Yes ● No

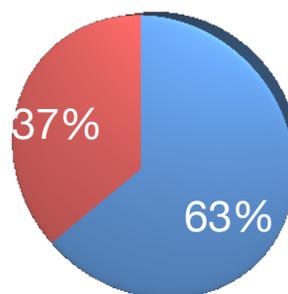


***Reflecting back upon the material would take very little time, be free of cost and would dramatically increase the retention of the information.***

4. Have you been in a situation where this training came into use?

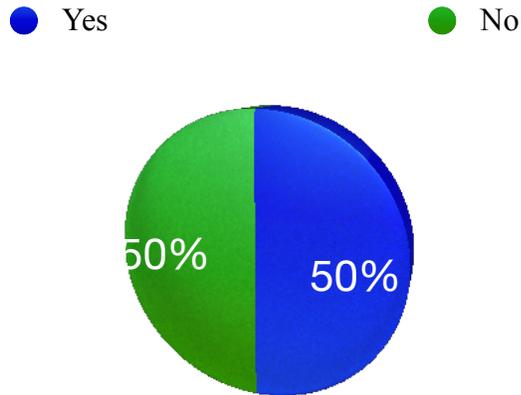
Yes- 63% No- 37%

● Yes ● No



5. Did you have an opportunity to discuss this class or these de-escalation skills with other officers?

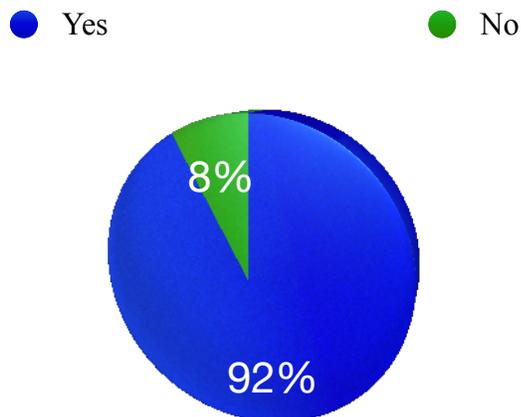
Yes- 50% No- 50%



*A facilitated discussion about the class, during another in-service training, would take very little time, be free of cost and would dramatically increase the retention of the information.*

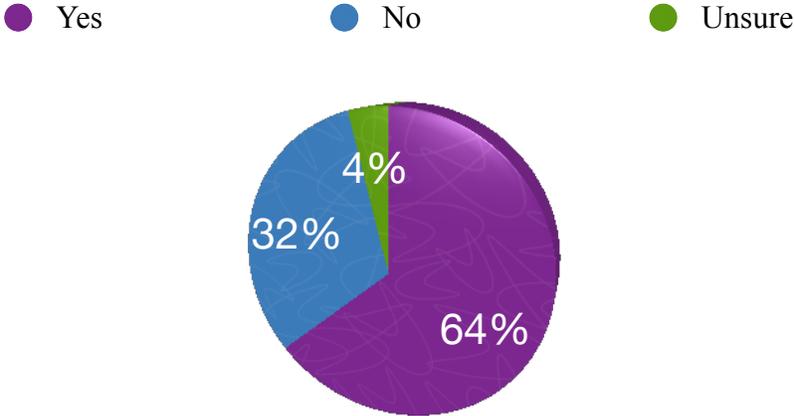
6. Do you think this training was helpful in assessing situations before they escalated or so they don't escalate at all?

Yes- 92% No- 8



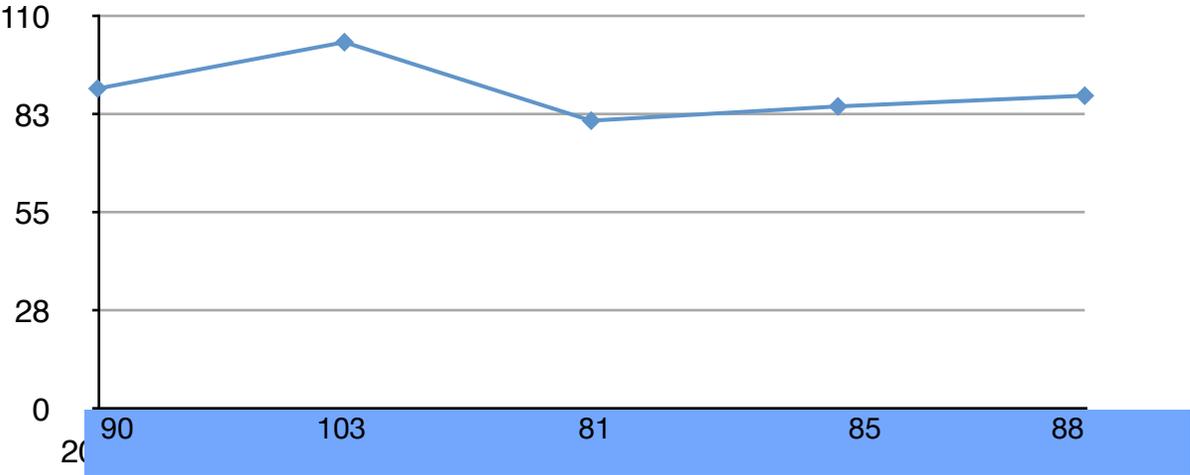
7. If you had the opportunity to attend the full CIT training, would you and why/why not?

Yes- 64% No- 32% Unsure- 4%

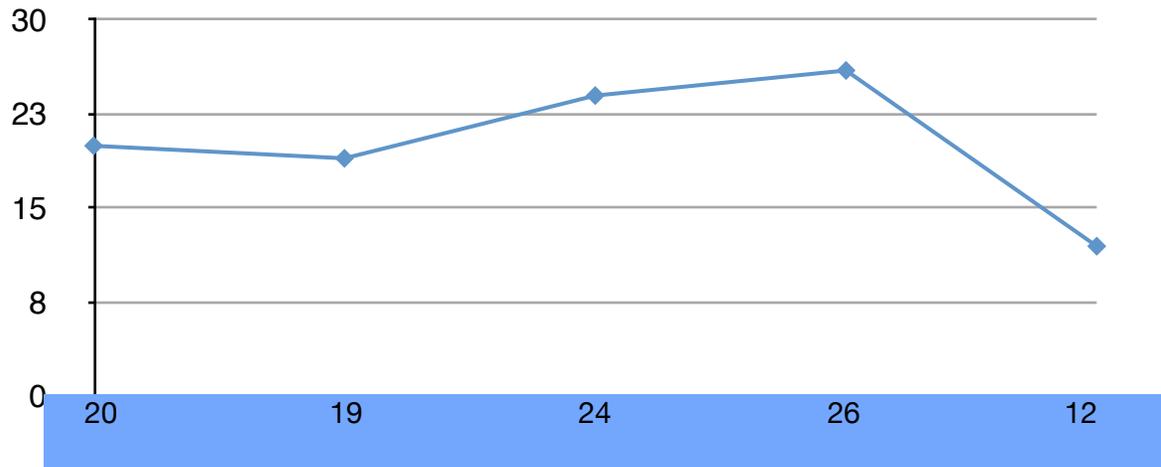


Data for the numbers of emergency detentions and civil commitments in Pierce County was collected between 2010 and part of 2014.

Number of Emergency Detentions in Pierce County



### Number of Civil Commitments in Pierce County



### Conclusion

The results show that the officers thought the class was useful. The recommendation is that the class be continued to be held because it shows that it is helpful to learn the skills of verbal de-escalation for their job. Most of the officers, if given the chance, said that they would attend the full forty hour training. The officers found the class extremely useful to help with mental health situations or other emotionally charged situations that they otherwise may not have known what to do. Looking at the data on emergency detentions there is a large decline in the number detained and then the numbers slowly start to rise by three to four people each year for the following years.

The data for civil commitments shows an increase in the number of people civilly committed until 2014 when it declined by over half from the previous year. Our data is incomplete since the training lasted until March of 2015. The number of civil commitments was lowest in 2014, but we cannot conclude this was because of the class because it was for only half of the year and the class wasn't completed until March 2015. The data shows a correlation that the class may have helped to bring the number down. However, to understand if the number of civil commitments went down, due to the class, is to continue to look at data collected for years following this class. Then this can truly be evaluated with more complete data.

### **Class Cost:**

The budget for the class was \$5639. There are 104 officers in Pierce County. One hundred were trained. Funding came from a grant from the United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties, a grant from Pierce Pepin Cooperative in Ellsworth, WI, and a donation from Turning Point for Victims of Violence in River Falls.

### **Literature and Resource Referenced**

Ellsworth Police Department

Flanders, Linda. "Crisis Intervention Opinion Page"

"NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness." NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Feb. 2015.

Pierce County Sheriff's Department

Prescott Police Department

River Falls Police Department

Spring Valley Police Department

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United States. FBI. Crisis Negotiation Team. Verbal De-Escalation Skills for Law Enforcement on Mental Health Crisis Calls. By Dwayne Fuselier. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.s