

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 851

Commending the Crisis Intervention Team program.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2015

Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2015

WHEREAS, the Crisis Intervention Team program in Virginia Beach focuses on helping people in mental health emergencies seek appropriate help as an alternative to punitive incarceration; and

WHEREAS, Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs) were established through a collaborative effort by the Virginia Beach Police Department, the Virginia Beach Community Mental Health Emergency Services, the Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office, and the Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia Beach, the collaboration needed to establish CITs also includes advice from family members of individuals with mental illness and the individuals themselves; all members of the group work to determine how best to de-escalate crisis situations and move a person from law-enforcement custody to mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, two goals of the CIT program are to decrease the number of people who are incarcerated for minor infractions of the law, specifically those whose actions are attributable to mental illness, and to make interactions between law enforcement and people in crisis safer for both parties; and

WHEREAS, CITs also are an efficient way to best utilize law-enforcement personnel, save time, and have police officers focus on their public safety role; and

WHEREAS, it is not unusual for the mentally ill to behave in a manner that makes people around them believe they are more dangerous than is the case; the training that CIT members receive helps them defuse tense situations and assess the best type of care for a person with mental illness; and

WHEREAS, another laudable effort of the CIT program is to help ensure that people with mental illness who have come to the attention of law enforcement will have a better chance of receiving appropriate care, such as counseling, medication, and other forms of treatment; and

WHEREAS, CIT law-enforcement officers respond when mental health issues seem to contribute to a situation for which police intervention was requested; the responding CIT member may be able to handle the situation or may utilize the services of the CIT Assessment Center; and

WHEREAS, staff at the CIT Assessment Center, which is housed at the Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center, have many options available in their work with people in distress; they can provide crisis stabilization, hospitalization, shelter assistance, emergency medical help, and other community resources; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia Beach, the CIT program has become a successful community partnership that allows people with mental illness to be directed away from the judicial system to the health care system by well-trained and caring law-enforcement officers and emergency responders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Crisis Intervention Team program in Virginia Beach for its work to help people in mental health emergencies seek appropriate care as an alternative to punitive incarceration; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the coordinator of the Crisis Intervention Team program as an expression of the General Assembly's respect and admiration for its dedicated and compassionate work on behalf of individuals with mental illness.

ENROLLED

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