

# Why and How to Engage Families as Presenters in Training for Health, Education, and Law Enforcement Community Agency Partners

## Family Involvement in the Training of Law Enforcement Personnel The Omaha Police Department Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)

### Background

In the late 1990s, Omaha Police Department community outreach personnel collaborated with regional mental health providers due to the need for more training for police officers regarding dealing with individuals with mental illness in the community. The CIT training, a week-long training series, was developed to this end.

In 2005, Based on comments by officers that they encountered similar issues in working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, MMI was invited to participate in the training series. Training on effective communication techniques common myths about disabilities, effective ways to intervene when interacting with a person with a disability (including protecting their rights,) and additional resources for more information, provided in a didactic format.

In 2010, in discussions with CIT staff, the training format was revised. Parents and their adult children (who had “real life” experiences in dealing with law enforcement) were identified to present in a panel format. They, with assistance from UCEDD staff, tell their personal stories about what worked and didn’t work for them. The presentations are planned in order to insure the widest applicability of the information and to focus on solutions. Following this, officers are given the opportunity to “have a conversation” with the panelists, asking questions and posing their own ideas and concerns. The ratings by trainees increased significantly in response to the new format. Training frequency and durations were increased as a result.

### Impact

Over the past seven years, over 300 police officers, deputy sheriffs, corrections officers, and other law enforcement personnel have participated in the CIT.

### Family Participation

We currently have 5 parent/family member trainers who participate in the CIT panels.

For more information, contact:

Mark A. Smith, M.S.

[msmitha@unmc.edu](mailto:msmitha@unmc.edu)

402.559.5744

