

Mississippi Department of Mental Health



HB 1222 Overview Law Enforcement and Mental Health

Collaborative Response to Mental Health Act

In 2023, the Mississippi Legislature introduced and passed House Bill 1222, known as the Mississippi Collaborative Response to Mental Health Act. Section 2 of this bill addresses collaboration between mental health practitioners and law enforcement agencies throughout the state, requiring both county and municipal law enforcement agencies to receive training in Mental Health First Aid and Crisis Intervention Team training. The bill requires:

- Each county and municipal law enforcement agency shall provide **Mental Health First Aid training to all law enforcement officers** who are employed or contracted by the agency **by July 1, 2031**.
- Each county and municipal law enforcement agency shall employ **at least one officer who is a Crisis Intervention Team officer on or before July 1, 2025**. Agencies with fewer than five officers may execute an agreement with one or more agencies for their Crisis Intervention Team officers to serve as the officer for the smaller agency.



Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. It is an evidence-based training that gives participants the skills they need to reach out and provide the initial help and support needed by someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use issue. There are three options for training:

- **Virtual** - Participants complete a two-hour, self-paced course online and then a 4.5 - 5.5 hour video conference
- **Blended** - Participants complete a two-hour, self-paced course online and then a 4.5 - 5.5 in-person class
- **In Person** - Participants receive training in an eight-hour, instructor-led, in-person class

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety focuses on the unique experiences and needs of public safety personnel and is a valuable resource that can make a difference in their lives, their coworkers' and families' lives, and the communities they serve. **Why is it needed? Because it helps you too.** One out of every four officers thinks about suicide at some point in their lives, and approximately 1,000 officers in the country are experiencing PTSD on the job. Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety can teach how to identify common risks and warning signs, but also the self-help and support strategies you need. To schedule training, contact the Department of Mental Health today.

Contact: Courtney Littleton
Director of the Division of Outreach and Training
courtney.littleton@dmh.ms.gov, 601-359-6268

Crisis Intervention Team Training

A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program creates **a true partnership between law enforcement, mental health providers, hospital emergency services, and individuals with mental illness and their families**. Officers who have received CIT training respond to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and divert them to an appropriate setting to provide treatment, ensuring individuals are not arrested and taken to jail due to the symptoms of their illness. CITs are a nationally-recognized best practice, and officers who have received CIT training have been recognized as having the understanding and skills needed to resolve crisis situations.

CIT officers receive **40 hours of training on topics such as mental health diagnoses, medications, substance use issues and more**. They also receive hands-on instruction in de-escalation techniques and hear first-hand accounts from individuals who have experienced mental health crises themselves. The training has a specific focus on safety, for both the officers and the individuals in crisis. Contact the Department of Mental Health today to arrange CIT training.

Contact: Linda Foley
Statewide CIT Coordinator
linda.foley@dmh.ms.gov

Mississippi Department of Mental Health | 601-359-1288

24/7 DMH Helpline | 1-877-210-8513

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**SHATTER
THE SILENCE**
Suicide: the secret you shouldn't keep

988 and Suicide Prevention and Awareness

Shatter the Silence

Suicide is a serious public health issue in the United States and in Mississippi. **Each day, 132 Americans die by suicide, and for every one death, there are 25 attempts. In Mississippi, there were 480 deaths by suicide in 2021.** Most of those, around 81%, were males. Suicide can have lasting and harmful effects on individuals, families, and entire communities.

Mental health matters in the field of public safety. Nearly one in four police officers thinks about suicide at some point in their life, and approximately 12 officers die by suicide each month in the United States. There are also around 1,000 officers in the country experiencing PTSD on the job. **In 2020, 145 law enforcement officers died by suicide in the US.** In addition to Mental Health First Aid, the Department of Mental Health also offers its suicide prevention and awareness training, **Shatter the Silence**, throughout the state. A customized version for public safety professionals discusses not just the misconceptions around mental health and suicide, but focuses on how to help and support law enforcement.

Why Do Officers Not Seek Help?

- Strong subculture, sometimes "Us vs. "Them" mentality
- Family tradition
- Your own strength saves your life

Why Do Officers Take Their Own Lives?

- Perceived failure. "If only I had . . ."
- Pride. Fear of job loss. "This is the only job I know."
- Retirement. Identity crisis. No more uniform or badge.

What Can You Do For Yourself Or Another Officer?

Educate yourself and others.
Have the courage to seek help.

Be supportive without judgement.
Confide in a trusted peer.

Do not ignore a problem or think it will go away, and don't compare or downplay someone else's situation. Remember that we're all individuals, and we may never truly know what is in a person's thoughts or going on in their lives that we don't know about. Law enforcement professionals are willing to lay down their lives to serve their communities, and communities are there to support you too. **Don't hesitate to reach out for help - whether that's for yourself or one of your fellow officers.** If you would like more information or to schedule a Shatter the Silence presentation for your department, **contact Director of Suicide Prevention Ja'Quila Newsome at 601-359-6252 or jaquila.newsome@dmh.ms.gov.**



The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide and Prevention Lifeline) is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States. The 988 dialing code launched in July 2022, providing a simple, easy-to-remember number. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. Mississippi has two call centers that answer calls to 988. When someone calls, a trained crisis worker at the local center will answer the phone.

Find more information and resources at www.988lifeline.org.

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