

# DIVERSION FIRST

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/diversionfirst](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/diversionfirst)

Diversion First offers alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness or developmental disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system for low level offenses.

The goal is to intercede whenever possible to provide assessment, treatment or needed supports. People needing diversion may also have a substance use disorder, which often co-occurs with mental illness.

Diversion First is designed to prevent repeat encounters with the criminal justice system, improve public safety, promote a healthier community, and is a more cost-effective and efficient use of public funding.

## Commitment to Training

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is an intensive, state-certified program that addresses the challenges of living with a mental illness or developmental disability. CIT training teaches officers and deputies how to de-escalate crisis situations, both in the community and in the jail.

## If You Need Help

- ♦ If a situation is immediately life-threatening, call 911. Ask for a Crisis Intervention Team officer.
- ♦ Otherwise, call Community Services Board (CSB) Emergency Services (ES): 703-573-5679 or TTY 711 for hearing impaired.
- ♦ Or go to Merrifield Center, 8221 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive, Fairfax, VA 22031. ES entrance is on lower level.

## What Happens at CSB Emergency Services?

- ♦ Emergency Services (ES) clinician assesses risk of situation and person's condition.
- ♦ ES staff helps person become stabilized (calming room, medication if needed). If person needs psychiatric hospitalization, ES staff works to find an appropriate placement. (Merrifield is not a hospital; people do not stay there.)
- ♦ ES staff can look up individual's electronic health record, if already receiving CSB services, and consult staff familiar with person's situation.
- ♦ Staff may recommend additional services and supports for individual and family, either from CSB or from other providers in the community.

## Diversion First

The investment Fairfax County has made in Diversion First is having a significant impact.

- ♦ In 2018, law enforcement officers brought 2,278 people to the Merrifield Crisis Response Center (MCRC). Of that number, 530 faced possible criminal charges but were diverted to mental health services instead of being arrested and brought to jail. *Since January 1, 2016, over 1,500 people have been diverted from potential arrest.*
- ♦ In 2018, CSB emergency services staff conducted 1,616 mental health evaluations related to emergency custody orders (ECOs). *In 2017, the number was 1,365.*
- ♦ As of June 2019:
  - 780 law enforcement officers were certified in the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team training.
  - 642 Sheriff's deputies and correctional health nurses completed the eight-hour Mental Health First Aid training as did magistrates.
  - 1,610 Fire and Rescue personnel completed a four-hour Mental Health First Aid training, tailored by the CSB for their needs.
  - 163 9-1-1 call takers (dispatchers) completed eight hours of customized crisis intervention training.

Questions? Need more information?  
Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs  
703-324-7329, TTY 711



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