

The Chicago Police Department has launched a new voluntary, advanced CIT training program on Veterans issues. Spurred on by a three-year federal grant, 340 hour classes have been completed thus far and included several officers who are themselves Veterans or in the Reserves/National Guard. Building on basic CIT training, focus on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Substance Abuse, Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Family and Woman's issues were included in the didactic sections. The panels of Veterans and community providers put a face on these serious issues that need immediate, closer attention by law enforcement and justice together. Role-playing took on a new dimension by allowing class participants initial opportunity to sit down with role players and create scenarios of their own from past experience on the street. This unexpectedly resulted in ownership and added realism when acted out and reviewed by the class. Of course work is underway to develop a CIT pin recognizing successful completion of the additional 40 hours of advanced training.

In addition, Cook County has initiated a Felony Veterans Court that works with CIT. Emphasis is on addressing housing issues and diversions to local VA Hospital services aimed at the alternative of probation and reduce recidivism. The offices of the States' Attorney, Public Defender and community services continue their collaborative effort initiated with the existing Mental Health Court. The hope is to better address Viet Nam Veteran arrestees as well as those emerging from the theater of Iraq and Afghanistan (OIF/OEF) who are increasingly coming face to face with the criminal justice system. Partnering with the John Marshall Law School Veterans Legal Support Center & Clinic, veterans can obtain advice and referral for representation on a host of issues including civil and criminal matters as well as eligibility for benefits. Emerging issues of collateral sanctions, non-violent weapons charges and domestic violence issues underscore the importance of cooperation between different civil and military branches to work together now to insure the present and future respectful treatment of our warrior heroes.

Next month, Chicago hopes to conduct the first class for advanced Juvenile CIT training. Another 40-hour class that will attract the School Officers already trained in basic CIT as well as those from the Patrol Division at large.

For further information, please contact the Chicago Police Department CIT program at 312-745-5745, Mark Kammerer of the Veterans Court Services of Cook County, Illinois at 773-869-2258 or the John Marshall Law School at <http://www.jmls.edu/veterans>.