

## **Mental Health Crisis Response Training (MHCRT)**

The *Mental Health Crisis Response Training* (MHCRT) curriculum includes instructional training manuals, online interactive content, problem-based learning scenarios, simulations, and the “De-escalating Persons in Crisis Competencies Tool” DePICT™, the first validated evaluation framework to assess officer competencies in de-escalation and mental health crisis response.

The objective of the made-in-Ontario MHCRT program is to develop officer skill sets in the areas of de-escalation and crisis response for community members living with mental illness or experiencing mental health crisis. It also demonstrates the ministry’s continued commitment to address recommendations on de-escalation from the Ontario Ombudsman and its responsiveness to the current issues.

This training has been developed with standardized, evidence-based, de-escalation content, and has several advantages, including:

- enhanced competencies training by further developing relational policing values (with particular attention to racialized communities), de-escalation communication and tactics and empathy towards people in mental health crisis;
- increased portability and scalability of the curriculum to address training a large and geographically dispersed group of police services;
- strong scientific validation in comparison to other de-escalation training content;
- scenarios designed with scaling difficulty; they can be adapted to be easier or harder depending on the skill of the officer and will be appropriate for police officers of all levels of experience; and
- the integration of anti-bias skills and concepts developed in partnership with Indigenous cultural safety experts, which will help address public concerns of bias and police use of force in mental health crisis situations.

The MHCRT curriculum was developed in collaboration with a broad spectrum of subject matter experts, including:

- Researchers from three (3) Canadian universities (Wilfrid Laurier University, Ryerson University, University of Victoria);
- Expert Technical Table members (OPP, Peel Regional Police, Durham Regional Police and Toronto Police Service);
- Use of Force Trainers Community of Practice;
- Police academies/colleges;
- Clinicians from two research hospitals (CAMH and Ontario Shores);
- Community advocacy associations;
- Ministry of Health/mental health stakeholders (e.g. Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario), including people with lived experience of mental illness;
- San’yas Anti-racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Education;
- Experts with Indigenous-specific knowledge concerning mental health and addictions to develop a culturally specific curriculum on effective and appropriate response to Indigenous persons in crisis, including two Indigenous cultural safety agencies;

- Anti-Racism Directorate; and
- Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

### **Virtual Reality Mental Health Crisis Response Training (VR-MHCRT)**

The MHCRT integrates moment-to-moment feedback from subject matter experts with a range of specializations—from clinicians and people with lived experience to police trainers—that allow officers to safely rehearse best practices and modify approaches on their feet, in situ, as the scenario unfolds. The migration of MHCRT training into the VR MHCRT incorporates the following capabilities:

1. Trainee-responsiveness. Rather than offering users fixed branching scenarios consisting of multiple-choice options, the VR technology is adaptable and trainee-responsive. The level of complexity (e.g. environmental factors, presence of weapons, bystanders) can be dialed up or down depending on the trainee's level of experience (from recruits to senior officers).
2. Integrated and time-sensitive feedback. The VR MHCRT enables trainees to see and hear other police users in 3D space and receive moment-to-moment feedback from subject matter experts and training instructors.
3. Fully immersive environment. Unlike interactive 360-degree video the VR MHCRT offers a fully immersive VR environment and allows officers to exercise their judgement and practice their skills in de-escalating crisis situations. Training officers can change the environment settings in the VR MHCRT to accommodate various scenarios that reflect real life.
4. Dynamic interactivity. Officers can move around the virtual space, pick up objects, interact with others, and experience the dynamic fluidity of a scenario.
5. Multiple-user interaction and team-based decision-making. The ability to have multiple users in a scenario allows officers to practice resolving conflict situations with the back-up of additional unit members.
6. Body language and position tracking. The ability to track officer body position, gaze, distances, speed of movement to offer enhanced feedback.