



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Public Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

Re: Encounters with Citizens in Crisis Positively Impacted by Crisis Intervention Training

Date: May 23, 2022

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) was initiated at the Hernando County Sheriff's Office several years ago. The training focuses on individuals who are experiencing a crisis, anything from the loss of a loved one, a mental health crisis, or a substance abuse issue, just to name a few. The curriculum provides the necessary tools to deescalate the situation and resolve the issue peacefully. The training is provided to new and veteran employees. As of today, 137 deputies have received the training. In addition to law enforcement deputies, the training is also offered to detention deputies and telecommunicators. The training will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Citizens regularly reach out to the HCSO when in crisis and/or are suicidal. When deputies respond, the chances are higher that the individual may be aggressive and/or hostile to anyone they encounter, including the deputy or deputies.

CIT is providing for a noticeable decrease in use of control incidents, especially as it pertains to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. For example, in **2014**, the HCSO logged **906 Baker Act reports** with a total of **seven use of control incidents**. In **2015**, the HCSO logged **971 Baker Act reports**, with **six of those cases resulting in a use of control incident**.

A Baker Act is when an individual is taken to a mental health facility for involuntary examination, due to his or her actions. Said actions, or threat of actions, could result in self-harm or harm to others.

A Use of Control Incident is logged when a deputy or deputies, are required to use physical controls on an individual. It may also involve the use of a tool, such as oleoresin capsicum

spray, commonly known as "pepper spray," to subdue a violent individual, with little to no injury.

Over the last several years, the number of Baker Act reports has increased, while the number of use of control incidents has decreased.

In 2021, the HCSO logged **1,129 Baker Act reports**, which resulted in **only three use of control incidents**. This means deputies were able to resolve such situations without the use of any type of force, **99.73%** of the time.

Further, the HCSO logged **292,290 citizen contacts in 2021**. This number includes calls for service and self-initiated activity. These contacts resulted in 5,736 physical arrests or notices to appear in court. Of those **292,290 contacts**, there were **35 use of control incidents** noted. As previously stated, three of those use of control incidents were in relation to a Baker Act report. This leaves only **32 use of control incidents for 5,736 arrests**. This means use of control was only used **0.56%** of the time, during an arrest. The ability to gain and maintain compliance without having to resort to a use of control, the vast majority of the time, is notable.

The HCSO will continue to provide CIT to new and existing employees. The curriculum is evaluated regularly, with updates being made as needed. We strive to continuously provide quality support and services to citizens who live in, or are passing through, Hernando County.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.