St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office
Steven A. Hall, Sheriff
23150 Leonard Hall Drive, Leonardtown, MD 20650

NEWS RELEASE

Six Members of St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Complete Crisis Intervention Team Training

LEONARDTOWN, MD (November 4, 2025) – During the week of October 27–31, six members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office (SMCSO) successfully completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training held at the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship.

Graduates included Correctional Officer First Class John Edelen, Correctional Officer Branden Mills, Deputy Joseph Senatore, Captain Stephen Simonds, Deputy Phillip Davis, and Deputy First Class Alexander Tasciotti.

CIT programs are nationally recognized for equipping law enforcement officers with the skills to safely and effectively respond to individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. Beyond officer training, successful CIT programs enhance crisis response systems, advocate for essential services, and foster partnerships among law enforcement, mental health providers, and the community.

Throughout the training, participants learned about mental health law, emergency petition procedures, verbal de-escalation, traumatic brain injury, and developmental disabilities. They also heard firsthand accounts from individuals and families affected by mental health and substance use challenges. Officers practiced de-escalation techniques through role-play scenarios designed to help determine the most appropriate response for each situation.

The CIT program is a community partnership among law enforcement, mental health and addiction professionals, individuals living with behavioral health challenges, their families, and other local partners, all working to improve community responses to mental health crises.

In Southern Maryland, the program is a collaboration among the Sheriff's Offices and Health Departments of St. Mary's, Charles, and Calvert counties, the Maryland State Police, and other allied agencies. Captain Sarah Smith serves as the CIT Commander, Alexis Higdon, NCC, LCPC, is the CIT Coordinator, and Sergeant Anthony Whipkey is the Law Enforcement CIT Coordinator for the SMCSO.

Through their participation in this program, the graduates are now better prepared to respond with empathy, professionalism, and skill, further strengthening the Sheriff's Office's commitment to public safety and compassionate crisis intervention.

Media Inquiries: ALisa Casas, Public Information Officer
SMCSO.PIO@stmaryscountymd.gov 301-475-4200, ext. 1986

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(l-r back row): Correctional Officer First Class John Edelen, Deputy First Class Anthony Cucinotta, Deputy First Class Alexander Tasciotti. Deputy Joseph Senatore, Deputy Phillip Davis, Captain Stephen Simonds.
(l-r front row): Correctional Officer First Class John Edelen, Captain Sarah Smith, Deputy Devin Absher, Alexis Higdon, Sergeant Anthony Whipkey.

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