



# NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Mission Health, Buncombe County EMS Boost Crisis Situation Skills**

#### ***Training equips local paramedics to help people in a mental health or addiction crisis***

September 30, 2015 – Thirteen paramedics from Mission Health and Buncombe County EMS are now better equipped to respond to people with concerns related to mental illness, addiction or developmental disabilities and help people get treatment when needed.

The paramedics completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training on three Thursdays in September at the Mission Regional EMS Dispatch Center in Asheville. Graduating paramedics from Mission Health were: Zach Wood, Jay Schreiner, Mitch Pickelsimer, Thomas Ward, Nathan R. Murray, Jenny Wallace, Bryan Dixon, Tucker Forlines, Christian Brackett and Anthony Thomas, along with Mission Health co-facilitator Randy Fugate. Graduating paramedics from Buncombe County EMS were: Mark Wike and C. Max Boswell.

The training was provided at no cost by Smoky Mountain LME/MCO (Smoky), a public managed healthcare organization. "Since 2008, Smoky has trained more than 650 western North Carolina law enforcement officers and paramedics in CIT," said Genny Pugh, Smoky's Senior Director of Community Collaboration. "CIT develops first responders communication skills to reduce the intensity of potentially dangerous situations, resulting in increased citizen and responder safety. CIT sets the stage for better outcomes."

Among other topics, paramedics learned about child behavioral health, issues related to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, trauma, the involuntary commitment process, suicide risk factors and substance use disorders. They also participated in a dementia simulation and role-playing exercises.

"We appreciate Smoky for stepping up to provide CIT training designed for paramedics in the community," said Dr. Jim Hartye, Mission Health Medical Director of Behavioral Health. "These community paramedics and EMTs are asked to meet and care for mental health patients in the field every day. This CIT preparation provides them with the basis to deal more effectively with what can be very challenging situations. As we move forward together as a community to fashion an effective system of care, it will take these kinds of collaborations to do it well."

"Safety in our community depends on training first responders to quickly and accurately assess and apply the right approach in the field, as well as equipping them with an expanded toolkit that includes

enhanced assessment and communication skills,” said Mandy Stone, Buncombe County Assistant County Manager. “CIT training increases community safety and is critical to connecting consumers to the appropriate level of care and ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources.”

The first CIT program – a collaborative effort among law enforcement, advocates and mental health communities – was formally established in 1988 in Memphis, Tenn.

### **About Smoky Mountain LME/MCO**

Smoky Mountain LME/MCO manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual/developmental disability services in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties in North Carolina. Access to services is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 1-800-849-6127. Visit Smoky online at [www.smokymountaincenter.com](http://www.smokymountaincenter.com).