

Information Item

Date: January 11, 2021

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Tasha Logan Ford, Assistant City Manager
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Subject:
Alternative Police Response Strategies

Strategic Focus Area: Safe and Secure Community
Strategic Objective: Improve Public Safety Service Quality
Strategic Plan Action Item: No
Key Work Item: No



City staff from the Police Department, the Office of Performance and Accountability and Strategic Initiatives worked collaboratively since Fall 2020 to review alternative response strategies to incidents related to mental and behavioral health. In August, the City of Winston-Salem joined an on-going seven-city partnership to analyze 911 call data. In early October, staff began researching other communities, nationwide, regarding alternative response strategies for law enforcement.

Research on Co-Response and Alternative Response Models in Other Jurisdictions

The following research provides information on alternative response models for mental and behavioral health related incidents where law enforcement is typically the primary responder. Information on program goals and response protocols is provided to demonstrate how programs in other cities work. Where available, performance information is provided to allow for review of intended output and outcomes. This report does not detail other alternative response models (non-mental health related) but does mention those programs anecdotally where research was found on the program type.

Research indicates that cities around the country have been engaged in a co-responder model for response to mental and behavioral health (MBH) calls for service for many years. A co-responder model is one in which the response team to an incident includes a sworn law enforcement officer and mental health professional (often a licensed, clinical professional). The purpose of these models in supplementing or replacing traditional law enforcement is to reduce or mitigate interactions that might otherwise end with a citation, arrest, use of force, and/or incarceration.

All cities in the table below have some form of co-response model. The City of Los Angeles, California implemented its co-response program called Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART) in 1993. The City of Eugene, Oregon contracts with a mental and behavioral health provider to respond directly to certain types of calls (without initial dispatch of law enforcement personnel). This form is indicated as an “alternative response” model. Staff researched several cities inside and outside the state for their practices in responding to MBH calls for service. The table below provides basic details on response types in other cities. Los Angeles and Oakland have co-response models and are transitioning into alternative response models. Other cities may have discussed policy alternatives but have yet to take action regarding alternative responses.

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Implementation Year</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Service Delivery</u>
Eugene, OR	1989	Alternative Response	Contract
Los Angeles, CA	2020	Alternative Response	Contract
Oakland, CA	2020	Alternative Response	Planning Phase
Albuquerque, NM	2020	Co-Response	Contract
Charlotte, NC	2019	Co-Response	Contract
Denver, CO	2016	Co-Response	Contract
Greensboro, NC	2020	Co-Response	In-House
Houston, TX	2008	Co-Response	In-House
Minneapolis, MN	2018	Co-Response	In-House
Portland, OR	2013	Co-Response	Contract
Raleigh, NC	2020	Co-Response	In-House

The number and type of responders vary greatly between jurisdictions. Research demonstrates the following information with regard to responses:

- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) – Most cities listed above have dedicated CIT or MBH units with specific training in de-escalation tactics and dealing with mental health, substance abuse, and other personal crises. These units include officers with dedicated training in the field who respond to incidents and work directly with various community agencies on follow-up measures relating to MBH calls for service. The number of resources dedicated to these groups varies greatly between jurisdictions (much of the variation may be related to population/size).
- Co-Response with MBH Professional – All cities shown above engaged in some level of co-response where a certified law enforcement officer responded alongside a MBH professional. The following arrangements were noted:
 - *Certification of crisis staff* – The level of certification required to provide crisis support varied by jurisdiction. Most cities required a master’s level degree and/or licensure. The CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon requires only “several years experience in the mental health field.”
 - *Contract versus in-house MBH staff* – In several cities, the MBH professional worked for the city and directly under police department supervision. Some cities chose to provide MBH services via a contractor. It appears in most cases

that the co-response model included the police officer and the MBH professional arriving together to incidents; however, it was noted in at least one city that the officer and MBH professional arrived separately (and often at different times).

- Alternative Response Model – Eugene, Oregon’s Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) model is cited as a best practice in multiple articles and provides training around the country to law enforcement agencies on the model. The model includes triaging calls through emergency communications to dispatch a mobile crisis unit that does not include law enforcement personnel. The response includes a minimum of two persons (maximum of three) with medical and mental health training. Los Angeles, California began a similar program this year, and Oakland, California is developing a program as well. Charlotte, North Carolina also discussed this type of program and is expected to begin planning for alternative responses to MBH and other non-violent crimes. Given the limited number of examples, it is difficult to provide details on resource allocations for this model. It should also be noted that a few cities are researching alternative responses to other types of non-violent calls for service that do not require a law enforcement presence a majority of the time (e.g. noise violations, traffic issues, etc.)

CAHOOTS Model Reported Outputs, Outcomes, and Cost Data

Eugene, Oregon’s CAHOOTS model is cited in articles ranging from *Bloomberg Innovation* to *The Atlantic* as a best practice for alternative responses to emergency calls for service. A 2019 Eugene Police Department (EPD) report shows that CAHOOTS was the sole responder to 13,854 public calls for service that year. Several articles site these responses as a percentage of total calls (105,402 total public calls for service) yielding a diversion rate of 13.1%. However, the EPD report states that many emergency calls for service handled are only handled through emergency communications because the service is known to exist with 911 as the primary contact. Attempting to account for that difference, EPD estimates that the effective diversion rate is between 5% and 8%. That analysis did not include EPD self-initiated calls for service.

The financial analysis of the CAHOOTS program notes program expenditures of roughly \$2.1 million (includes the cities of Eugene and Springfield where services are provided) annually as of June 2020 – as reported by both EPD and the service provider. The service provider estimates the program saves approximately \$8.5 million dollars per year for law enforcement and another \$6.5 million per year in emergency room visits. The \$8.5 million dollars in EPD savings is estimated by using a figure of \$800 per call. There is some discrepancy in reported calls and the savings reported from multiple sources. Additional research would be necessary to determine the variation in reporting and the fiscal impact of the service as provided.

911 Calls for Service Project

The City of Winston-Salem is participating in an on-going seven-city partnership to analyze 911 call data. The project is conducting an analysis to evaluate if community resources align with community needs based on the types of calls for service coming to 911 centers. The City will

develop recommendations for improving responses by law enforcement and other first responder agencies based on this analysis.

To help understand and improve the responses to calls for service (CFS), the City of Durham invited RTI International, a non-profit research institute, to partner with cities in North and South Carolina to analyze their 911 CFS data and help develop recommendations for improving the responses of law enforcement to these calls as well as other first responder agencies. The other participating cities include Durham, Raleigh, Cary, Burlington, Greensboro, and Rock Hill, SC.

This work, supported by Arnold Ventures, identifies the types of CFS where the law enforcement role could be modified to help ensure each community's resources are appropriately aligned with their specific needs based on their call data.

The systematic analysis of 911 CFS data will be used to assess the nature of demand for law enforcement and other first responder resources, how law enforcement resources are deployed to respond to this demand, and whether the responses are appropriately aligned with community needs.

Goals of the 18-month project are threefold: (1) help Winston-Salem understand community needs through an analysis of CFS data; (2) identify alternative response interventions that fit community needs and align with available city resources; and (3) support the implementation and rapid evaluation of alternative response interventions.

Once completed, the results of this study and its standardized approach in analyzing 911 CFS data could then be used by other cities throughout the United States and abroad to help determine if resource allocations match what is needed in specific communities.

About RTI International

RTI International is an independent, nonprofit research institute dedicated to improving the human condition. Clients rely on us to answer questions that demand an objective and multidisciplinary approach — one that integrates expertise across the social and laboratory sciences, engineering and international development. We believe in the promise of science, and we are inspired every day to deliver on that promise for the good of people, communities and businesses around the world. For more information, visit <https://www.rti.org>.

About Arnold Ventures

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