



# Civilian First Responder Pilot Program

Photo courtesy: Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) in Denver, Colorado

A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE FROM FORWARD THROUGH FERGUSON

## THE NEED FOR CHANGE

In order for us to move toward a society where we experience **Justice For All**, we need people-centered and trauma-informed approaches that avoid escalation and incarceration. It's time to make bold changes to how St. Louis approaches public safety. We believe that those changes should be made by and for our communities because we keep us safe.

To begin, we would like to secure a meaningful and transformative investment into transforming St. Louis' public safety and crisis response systems. By allocating **\$3 million** to plan, implement, and evaluate a 2-year **Non-Police First Responder Pilot Program**, St. Louis County can create an improved public safety landscape that would better support equity and justice.

With this investment, our 911 dispatch system will shift drastically from one that promotes a "business-as-usual" agenda to one that facilitates community-centered holistic models of care.

Our current systems perpetuate a **cycle of harm**.

Some of the factors enabling the cycle are:

- A **lack of investment** into transforming the root causes of violence.
- A **dysfunctional and inefficient 911** and emergency-response dispatch system.
- **Police presence and escalation** when responding to 911 and non-emergency calls.
- **Racist culture and history** within police departments.

The Responder Program will break the cycle by providing:

- A community-based and trauma-informed approach to public safety that promotes residents' dignity, autonomy, and health.
- Faster 911 call response times.
- Fewer interactions between residents and armed police.
- Holistic and health-centered approaches to mental illness and substance use.
- Streamlined connections between residents and highly trained service providers.

# Pilot Program Timeline

## PHASE ONE

Month 0–6

### Program Planning

- Protocol for integration with current emergency response call system
- Community outreach and raising public awareness + establishment of a community working group
- Form administrative and operational structure + staff recruitment
- Key partner relationship building and partnership formalization between implementers and service providers
- Set evaluation framework

## PHASE TWO

Month 7–18

### Program Pilot

- **Month 7–12:** Implement an Administrative Team + 2 Response Teams (in pilot catchment area)
- **Month 13–14:** Mid-pilot Evaluation + community outreach and input
- **Month 13–18:** Expand Administrative Team + 4 Response Teams (assess expanded catchment area)
- Draft and finalize follow-up and referral process

## PHASE THREE

Month 19–24

### Evaluation and Sustainability

- **Month 18–19:** Evaluation of program expansion
- Publish evaluation results + conduct community storytelling campaign
- Explore County-wide or regional expansion of program
- Ensure sustainability

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES

At the local, regional, and national levels, there is financial support available for initiatives like the Non-Police First Responder Pilot Program. Through the American Rescue Plan Act, funding through the Department of Justice, and Congresswoman Cori Bush's (MO-01) People's Response Act, we can make our collective vision for equitable safety in St. Louis a reality.

## Non-Police First Responder Programs are **safe and effective**:

- **CAHOOTS**, a program based in Eugene, Oregon, diverts between approximately 5% to 8% of Eugene Police Department's Calls For Service (CFS).<sup>1 2</sup>
- In its first two months of operation, the first **San Francisco Crisis Response** team diverted 199 calls for service from law enforcement. The average response time was approximately 15 minutes from dispatch to arrival time on scene. The team reversed two overdoses that they observed in the community and provided transport to social and medical/behavioral services.<sup>3</sup>
- The **Denver STAR** program strives to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system and utilize a trauma-informed approach to individuals who may benefit from the unique expertise of a mental health clinician and an EMT. The STAR van's pilot program was able to handle 748 calls without assistance from Denver PD or resorting to incarceration.<sup>4</sup>

(1) CAHOOTS Program Analysis, <https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/56717/CAHOOTS-Program-Analysis> (2) An alternative to police: Mental health team responds to emergencies in Oregon, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mental-health-team-responds-to-emergencies-oregon-alternative-to-police-2019-10-23/?fbclid=IwAR27z-fdfcQCmicx3P-N28wphi2N7yb8Nk-tAYpfgJABsbKcLspcoLTLQmE> (3) Street Crisis Response Team Issue Brief, [https://www.sfdph.org/dph/files/IWG/SCRT\\_IWG\\_Issue\\_Brief\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/files/IWG/SCRT_IWG_Issue_Brief_FINAL.pdf) (4) STAR Program Evaluation, [https://www.denverperfect10.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/STAR\\_Pilot\\_6\\_Month\\_Evaluation\\_FINAL-REPORT.pdf](https://www.denverperfect10.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/STAR_Pilot_6_Month_Evaluation_FINAL-REPORT.pdf)