



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Law Enforcement Response to Behavioral Health Crises

CSG Justice Center

August 27, 2024 | Anne Larsen

Our time today

- Introductions and Organizational Overview
- Expanding First Response & Traditional Response
- Partnerships & Collaborations
- Workforce Opportunities
- Next Steps



The Council of State Governments Justice Center

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.



How We Work

- We bring people together
- We drive the criminal justice field forward with original research
- We build momentum for policy change
- We provide expert assistance



Our Goals

- Break the cycle of incarceration
- Advance health, opportunity, and equity
- Use data to improve safety and justice

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (Let Everyone Advance with Dignity) LEAD

A pre-booking diversion program model (sometimes teams that respond after police response and/or arrest) developed with the community to address low-level crimes by directing people to community-based services, instead of jail and prosecution.



Community Response

Mobile teams staffed by professionals trained in behavioral health de-escalation, assessment, and response who can respond to 911, 988, emergency, or urgent calls for service. They often provide immediate assistance to people experiencing behavioral health crises (such as mental illness, substance use, or an overdose), poverty-related support, welfare and wellness checks, assistance with housing needs, and de-escalation of minor disputes. Teams can also include EMTs or paramedics who provide physical assessments and appropriate medical support as part of the response.



Co-Response & Community Response & LEAD



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

DOJ/HHS guidance states that federal law requires that people with behavioral health needs and other disabilities receive a health response, not a law enforcement response. The guidance provides information on best practices on responding to and interacting with people with behavioral health needs and other disabilities. Information on crisis response models and community services is also included in the guidance.

[DOJ/HHS guidance](#)

[DOJ Special Litigation](#)

[Bread for the City vs. DC](#)

Partnerships & Collaborations – Familiar Faces

Olympia Police Department's **Familiar Faces Program** is staffed by certified peer support specialists, including women with lived experience. These specialists are adept at navigating the unique challenges encountered by women at the intersection of complex behavioral and physical health needs and the emergency response and criminal legal systems.

By focusing on shared life experiences, the program helps women overcome barriers related to behavioral health, housing, family, and legal issues. Familiar Faces ensures that women in Olympia receive the care they need in the community, fostering empowerment and connection through safe, individualized support and services.



Partnerships & Collaborations – Before the Badge

Seattle Police Department's **Before the Badge** (BTB) training program is an immersive, pre-academy training series designed to prepare recruits for the complexities of modern policing. The program emphasizes community engagement, emotional intelligence, cultural humility, and police wellness. It is designed to equip recruits with essential knowledge, skills, and relationships for effective, community-centered policing.



Partnerships & Collaborations –Before the Badge

BTB Gender-Responsive Training Module:

- ❑ Developed in collaboration with The IF Project and Dr. Emily Salisbury, PhD (University of Utah)
- ❑ Co-created with formerly incarcerated women to provide authentic insights into the experiences and challenges faced by women impacted by the criminal legal system
- ❑ Focuses on enhancing officer's understanding of gender dynamics, promoting more empathetic and effective policing



Workforce Opportunities

Women who have been impacted by the criminal legal system are especially powerful when employed within these programs, as they bring to the position awareness of the barriers faced by women and the hope that is necessary to surmount such obstacles.

Oftentimes, hiring practices and policies prevent women with the lived experience of incarceration from joining this workforce. Explore strategies for applying a gender-responsive framework to community responders, and building a workforce of highly qualified, highly effective responders and interventionists through the inclusion of impacted women.



 Expanding
First Response



Expanding First Response Commission

**Stand
Together**
Trust

The
Joyce
Foundation

Pew



Justice
Center



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Emerging Practices to Elevate and Replicate Community Responder Programs Nationwide

VISION: To create an integrated, standardized first response system that includes community responders as valued professional partners in the first response landscape.

1

Building and maintaining a professional identity with the community they serve

2

Integrating community responder programs into existing call centers and first response methods

3

Scaling community responder programming with funding

4

Managing and monitoring a program's quality through data collection and use



Next Steps

- The Expanding First Response Commission's focus on the role of state-level officials.
- Translated resources into Spanish.
- General and specific community responder program learning communities.
- Intensive 1:1 technical assistance.
- Continued partnership coordination.
- Strategic outreach and engagement.



Thank You!

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For more information, please contact Anne Larsen at alarsne@csg.org

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