

Police response addresses disturbances and crime in the moment, but it does not address systemic issues that drive criminal behaviors. Other ‘upstream’ factors contribute to societal stressors, such as a lack of mental health and substance abuse treatment capacity, childhood trauma, access to housing, institutional racism, environmental issues, and resource scarcity.

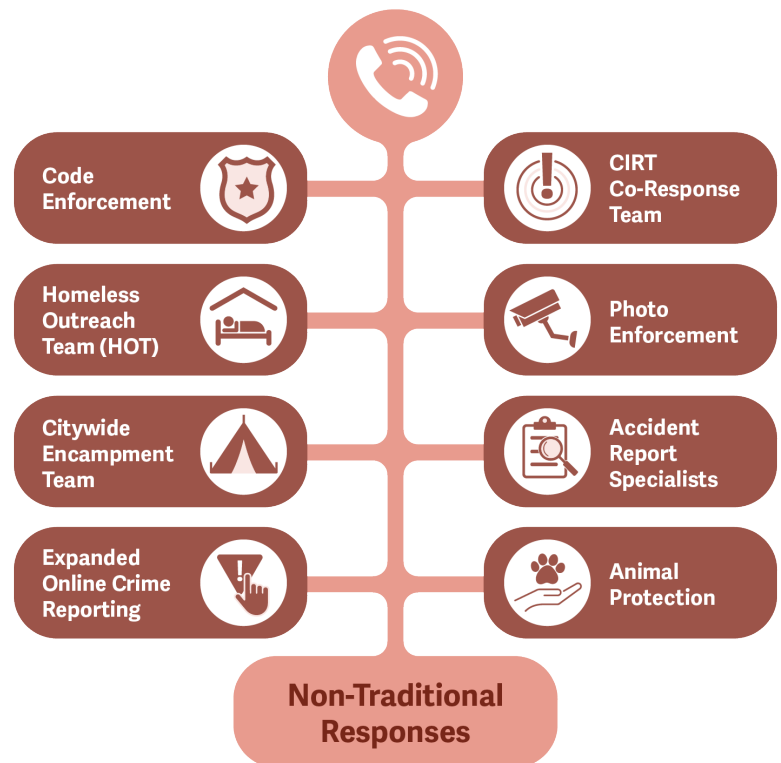
While the Boulder Police Department (BPD) has adopted some alternative strategies to handle these calls, upstream systemic issues are difficult for any one department or city to address alone as they are complex problems with most regulatory mechanisms and funding streams outside of the city’s scope of control.

BPD has been progressive in launching non-traditional responses to some calls for service. Not all public safety situations require the presence of an officer as a primary intervention, and low staffing numbers in the department put officer time at a premium. Officer time is prioritized for emergency situations: for example, a crime in progress, when a suspect is present, or when an arrest is needed.

Non-traditional responses already in place

Current examples of non-traditional responses, often in partnerships with other departments, to community problems are:

- the **CIRT co-response team** for behavioral health issues;
- Photo Enforcement for speed and red-light violation enforcement;
- Accident Report Specialists who investigate traffic crashes;
- Animal Protection;
- Code Enforcement;
- the **Homeless Outreach Team (HOT Team)**;
- a citywide team addressing encampments; and
- expanded online crime reporting.



Response without Police

BPD is committed to partnering with other city departments, as well as community organizations, to develop and support programs that help people avoid the criminal justice system.

In the next step to further BPD work in this strategy area, the department is now working with the city's Housing and Human Services (HHS), and Fire-Rescue departments to develop pilot concepts for additional alternative response programs that do not involve police, including a program similar to CAHOOTS in Eugene, OR and STAR in Denver. Boulder is following steps that mirror Denver's path in planning this pilot. Denver began by building a robust co-responder program similar to CIRT and eventually added STAR as a complementary program. Staff in Denver have indicated the intention to continue both the co-responder and STAR programs. A check in with City Council on Boulder pilot project options is scheduled for October of 2022.



Above: CIRT Clinicians

BPD seeks to anchor assessments of these programs in a clear set of community goals, guided by evidence. Currently there is little research on outcomes of alternative response programs, but new evaluations are taking place across the country and the city hopes to learn from that research to continually improve its offerings to the community.

Broader city context for social support partnerships

The Police Department supports strong investment by the city and its partners in social supports to improve the wellbeing of community members in the hopes of reducing crisis episodes or crime requiring police intervention.

The City of Boulder is relatively unique among municipalities of its size in supporting a robust **Housing and Human Services Department (HHS)**, funded at approximately \$25 million annually, which offers direct services and supports a broad range of community organizations providing health, housing, homelessness interventions and other essential services. HHS supports many preventative programs in the community and continues to initiate new programs to align with upstream investment recommendations from advocacy groups. For example, HHS is pursuing a guaranteed income pilot via American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that aligns with the **Center for Policing Equity's Roadmap for Exploring New Models of Funding Public Safety**. (The guaranteed income pilot was discussed during the May 24, 2022 city council meeting, with further information available in **council meeting materials from that date**.) For many years, HHS and BPD have worked in partnership to support community members in need through a variety of programs and the departments anticipate continued integration for alternative response going forward.