

Community Responder Teams

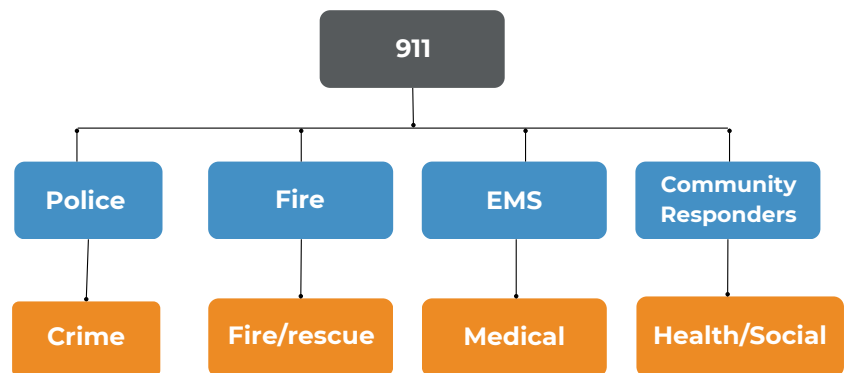
Community responders are a new type of first responder for nonviolent, noncriminal health and social needs. Teams of trained peers and health professionals respond independently (without police) to crisis and non-crisis calls for welfare checks, mental health, substance use, homelessness, and other social disturbances or quality-of-life concerns.

Most 911 calls are not about crime or violence.



Over 80% of 911 calls sent to Buffalo police between 2020-2022 did not involve crime or violence. Many calls are about traffic or vehicles, alarms, arguments, health concerns, and quality-of-life issues.

Community responders are the fourth branch of first response. Where police officers respond to crime, firefighters for fires, and paramedics for medical emergencies, community responders meet health and social needs.



What calls could go to community responders?



Welfare checks



Mental & emotional support



De-escalation & problem-solving



Connection to resources



Basic needs



Substance use/harm reduction

100+

American cities now operate alternative response teams for 911 calls.

Community Responder Teams

Community responders provide the right response at the right time. Cost savings are significant, with start-up costs repaid in as little as six months. Police officers have voiced support, as they are freed to focus on higher-priority issues like violent crime. In one city, public order crimes (loitering, etc.) decreased by over 30%. Programs are safe, with no deaths or serious injuries for staff or the public. Many programs respond to over 10,000 calls annually and divert up to half of noncriminal calls from a police response. Community responder teams rarely need to call for backup, with many programs requesting backup in less than 3% of all calls.

Where community responders fit in Erie County

Response	What it does	Who does it	In Erie County
Police, Fire, EMS	Traditional emergency response	All cities, towns & villages in Erie County	✓
CIT-trained police	Mental health crisis training	Police departments	✓
Co-response teams	Police + clinician together	Behavioral Health Teams (Endeavor Health clinician + police)	✓
Mobile crisis teams	Mental health emergencies	Licensed clinicians (Crisis Services, Spectrum CARES)	✓
Community responder teams	Nonviolent health/social needs	Trained peers & health professionals	

● = always include police ● = often include police ● = rarely include police

we need community responders!

Benefits of community responders

- + Free up traditional responders to focus on their mission
- + Prevent situations from escalating into emergencies
- + Connect people with the help they need, when they need it
- + Prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and incarceration
- + Reduce the risk of harm to responders and the public
- + Save taxpayer dollars with a more efficient response
- + Alleviate calls from the overburdened 911 system

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Community Responders
for Erie County