



Community-Led Response to Mental Health Crisis: A Pilot

Request for Information

Response Deadline: Friday May 31, 2024 @5PM, Boston Local Time

Boston Public Health Commission

The Center for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Section I. Description and Purpose of Request for Information (RFI)

As part of ongoing collaboration by the Boston Public Health Commission and the City of Boston, to enhance mental health crisis response services within our community, we are excited to invite organizations to respond to this Request for Information (RFI) to inform our strategy, with future potential to participate in this groundbreaking Community-Led Mental Health Crisis Response pilot project. Our goal is to gather information to support the implementation of a non-police, non-carceral, community-led mental health crisis response that fosters community engagement and support, while minimizing response from law enforcement, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and clinical providers who are mandated reporters, in mental health crisis situations.

The Boston Public Health Commission

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is the local public health department for the City of Boston. BPHC’s mission is to work in partnership with communities to protect and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, especially those impacted by racism and systemic inequities.

The Center for Behavioral Health and Wellness at the Boston Public Health Commission leads this project. The Center for Behavioral Health and Wellness was established in 2022 in response to the growing need for evidence-based, effective, and meaningful behavioral health resources. The Center aims to promote and coordinate behavioral health and wellness programming across Boston. We envision a community where all can achieve their ideal behavioral health and wellness, through just, trauma-informed, and intersectional approaches.

Costs

By submitting a response, respondents agree that any cost incurred in responding to this RFI, or in support of activities associated with this RFI, shall be the sole responsibility of respondent. BPHC shall not be held responsible for any costs incurred by respondents in preparing their respective responses to this RFI.

Review Rights

Responses to this RFI may be reviewed and evaluated by any person(s) at the discretion of BPHC, including independent consultants retained by BPHC now or in the future.

Public Record

All responses to this RFI will be public record under the Commonwealth’s Public Records Law, Mass. Gen. L. ch. 66 s. 10, regardless of confidentiality notices set forth on such writings to the contrary.

The purpose of this Request for Information is to gather input from community organizations and will not result in a contract.

Do NOT submit confidential information in your response.

I.I Timeline

April 29, 2024	Posted online at: BPHC RFPs and Bids Boston.gov and Boston Globe
May 9, 2024	Responding to an RFI Workshop/ Technical Assistance (TA)

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	<p>1:00-3:00pm</p> <p>Hosted on Zoom:</p> <p>https://bphc-org.zoomgov.com/j/1604614003?pwd=SVV3TFNaNnY1bnB3KzdCMzgwZXdsQT09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 160 461 4003 Passcode: 347511</p> <p>One tap mobile +16692545252,,1604614003#,,,,*347511# US (San Jose) +16469641167,,1604614003#,,,,*347511# US (US Spanish Line)</p>
<p>May 31, 2024</p>	<p>Responses due via email by May 31, 2024 by 5:00pm Boston Local Time</p> <p>Subject: RFI - Community-Led Response to Mental Health Crises: A Pilot</p> <p>Email: cbhwquestions@bphc.org</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS DEADLINE</p>

Section II. Background

In the Spring of 2020, thousands of people in Boston joined a national call for racial justice in response to police violence against Black communities. As a result, in 2021, the City of Boston invested \$1.75M in the operating budget initiating three pilot programs:

- *Co-response*: BPD improves and expands dedicated teams of police officers and mental health workers responding to 911 calls
- *Alternative response*: Boston Emergency Medical Services (EMS) reimagines deployment of EMTs, BEST clinicians, and other mental health workers in response to 911 calls
- *Community-led response*: Community-designed and community-led mental health crisis response.

Community-Led Design Group (CLDG) Process

The development of the third pilot initiative began in early Spring 2022. The City completed an RFP process where the City School and Boston Liberation Health were selected as facilitators to lead a process leading to recommendations for a community-led mental health crisis response model. The City also led a rigorous application process and identified community members on the Community-Led Design Group (CLDG). This group comprised 14 community members with lived and/or professional mental health experience.

Over the course of 8 months, through a data-driven, mixed-methods, evidence-informed process, the group developed a proposal for a community-led response model. In December 2022, the CLDG delivered the proposal to the Mayor’s Office and the Boston Public Health Commission. The proposal outlines a free, non-carceral, and non-police, community-led response accessible in Boston

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neighborhoods. The full proposal, as well as a summary of the proposal, can be found on The City School's website: <https://www.thecityschool.org/blog>. Anyone submitting a response to this RFI is encouraged to read the summary and/or full report.

We are close to beginning development of a pilot program. We believe that your valuable insights and perspectives will significantly contribute to the development of an effective and community-led, non-police, non-carceral mental health crisis response model. Your participation is essential for our team as we work towards creating a safer, more responsive environment for those experiencing mental health challenges.

Section III. Instructions for Responding to the RFI

This Request for Information (RFI) is open to organizations who serve Boston residents, with a strong emphasis on community engagement and empowerment. Responding organizations may specialize in mental health services, with a particular emphasis on serving diverse communities and individuals who may have frequent or increased contact with law enforcement, EMS, or clinical providers acting as mandated reporters in a crisis situation. Additionally, responding organizations with experience in crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques (i.e., peer response, warmlines and hotlines, grassroots) are encouraged to respond, as are those with previous experience in collaborating or working with local government agencies, law enforcement entities, EMS, peer response, etc.

In your response to this RFI, we are interested in learning about your potential vision, your experience, and what you believe it will take for this pilot (and future response) to be successful.

The objective of this initiative is to create a collaborative and community-led, non-police, non-carceral, mental health crisis response. We believe that organizations, that play a crucial role in the community, as well as members of the community, play a vital role in providing timely and appropriate support to individuals experiencing mental health crises.

To facilitate both our understanding of the community landscape and your understanding of this initiative, we kindly request your organization's input on the following questions to help us gather relevant information for building this pilot model.

Please respond to the following questions:

- 1. Please introduce yourself or your organization, a brief summary of what you do, the type of mental health services and/or responses your organization currently offers, the role that law enforcement may currently be involved with this work and/or responses, and your interest in this RFI/this pilot program (1 page maximum).**
- 2. Capacity and Expertise:**
 - What population(s) does your organization and programs typically serve?
 - How often is your organization faced with supporting community members with mental health needs and crisis intervention?
 - What are specific qualifications or training your members have in dealing with mental health crises? (if applicable, if not, move on to question 3)

3. Response Protocols:

- How does your organization envision a response to mental health crisis situations without involving law enforcement, EMS, and clinical providers who are mandated reporters?
- What are any current established protocols or strategies your organization follows in addressing mental health emergencies? (if applicable, if not, move on to question 4)

4. Collaboration and Communication:

- What do your community workers see as the highest need area in terms of both geographic area and scope-related needs (see Table 2. below)?
- What are community concerns and needs that are commonly voiced in the community/by the residents you work with?
- How does your organization collaborate with other community entities, such as providers or social services?
- How might the position of a Community Oversight and Accountability Board¹ be leveraged?

5. Accessibility and Inclusivity:

- What are the needs to ensure accessibility and inclusivity in mental health crisis response, considering diverse community needs?
- How might you consider the utilization and/or role of social media in requesting of response, considering its engagement by younger populations?

6. Scope, Logistics and Deployment:

- What considerations should be taken into account when deploying community responders to mental health crisis incidents?
- What training(s) would benefit your teams to feel more equipped and prepared to address the scope elements?

Table 2: Scope of Response

Someone having a mental health crisis
Sick visits and wellness checks
Safety or health concerns related to substance overuse, or syringe disposal
Gender or intimate partner violence
Safe non-police transportation to a hospital or a different location related to a mental health crisis
Neighborhood noise concerns
Support for caretakers when someone in their community has a mental health crisis
Significant incidents of trauma, including support around community violence, and/or community-wide incidents of racism or other systemic oppression, including police violence
Neighbors or community members unsure how to respond to a situation they're witnessing
Providing support to community members if police are called to a mental health crisis

¹ As mentioned in Appendix 1 in the December 2022 report: (<https://www.thecityschool.org/blog>) a Community Oversight and Accountability Board would advise on program implementation. A 15-member board with 5 community members selected and appointed by the city, and 10 selected and appointed by the Mental Health Response organizing coalition. The board should be reflective of 75% majority community members who will be most impacted by this program, as well as 75% from Boston's BIPOC community. For more details, please review Appendix 1 (page 43) of the report.

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- If your organization were to take on this Mental Health Crisis Community Responder Pilot – do you think all the following Scope elements (Table 2 above) should be addressed? Which items are a priority? Which items would you consider removing (if any) / what do you see that are being done by other organizations/programs?
 - What do you see as the largest difficulty/challenge(s) of implementing a Mental Health crisis response pilot?
7. Is there anything you would like to describe that you see as innovative ideas or models, that would benefit this type of model, implementation, etc.?

Section IV. Additional Information

Please submit your responses by Friday, May 31, 2024 @5PM, Boston Local Time.

Subject: RFI - Community-Led Response to Mental Health Crises: A Pilot

Email: cbhwquestions@bphc.org

For any questions about the Request for Information, your principal point of contact will be:

Name: Morgan Chen, Policy & Strategy Specialist, Center for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Email: cbhwquestions@bphc.org

This RFI can be found at [BPHC RFPs and Bids | Boston.gov](#). ***Any updates to the RFI will also be posted on that page.***

We are enthusiastic about the positive impact this community collaboration can have in our communities, and we look forward to hearing your insights informing our strategy for a Community-Led Mental Health Crisis Response Pilot.