

# Executive Summary

In the fall of 2022, Mission Critical Partners, LLC (MCP) was engaged by the City of Portland's (City or Portland) Community Safety Division (CSD) to perform a public safety provider call allocation and staffing study—holistically assessing the types of calls dispatched to public safety service providers and the number and type of public safety providers needed to respond to the different categories of calls. Since the CSD is responsible for building alternative emergency service models, a unique opportunity exists to analyze and examine the City's public safety service provider call type allocation and response staffing. This is the executive summary for the first of two reports.

Driven by many external factors outside of public safety's control, alternative response in the 911 community is a relatively new concept. Agencies across the United States have instituted several programs with the ability to safely transition calls from the 911 emergency communications center (ECC) and traditional fire, medical, and law enforcement responses to more appropriate services. Alternative responses have the potential to deliver appropriate responses faster, increase community engagement, decrease the risk to public safety personnel and citizens, and, most importantly, make communities safer. The key to an alternative response is a matrix of solutions crossing multiple perspectives, and research completed by MCP found the same results for Portland. While no national standards have been issued to the public safety community for how to appropriately respond to individuals experiencing a behavioral health event or for allocating resources other than traditional fire, medical, or law enforcement to other community-based needs, numerous states and local entities are working to address this issue.

*Terms introduced within the first report are explained in Appendix J of that report. Others may be found in the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) glossary.*

## Key Findings

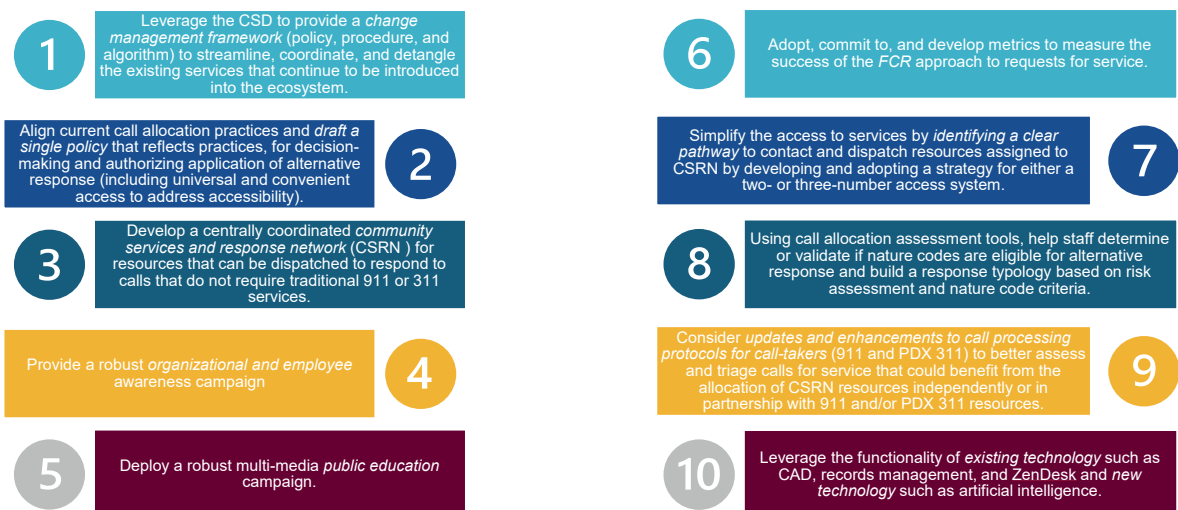
The findings and analysis for this study were based on information gathered through data collection efforts ranging from focus groups and key information interviews (KIIs) to the Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) Director's Reports, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and analysis of current workflows used to support both traditional and alternative response needs. The assessment yielded key findings, which are detailed in Section 2 of the report—ten are highlighted below.

- There are more than 60 city/county/state alternative programs/resource(s).
- Several constraints exist within the data that currently limit the ability to accurately ascertain desired key measurements, such as the percentage of calls that have previously gone to alternative responders.
- The future opportunities, considerations, and recommendations, while considerable, do not advocate for an entirely new set of call types or nature codes.
- The nearly 4,500 nature codes and their derivatives call for change and establishing agreed-upon criteria that can be used as a tool to consistently assess nature codes as alternative resources.
- There are multiple alternative response policies that reflect practices, increasing the risk of policy conflicts and confusion.
- The top 25 nature codes (total) across the police, fire, and medical disciplines represent 46% (285,223) of the 617,875 CAD incidents, with 44% (124,622) of the top 25 potentially eligible for an alternative response, which is 20% of all CAD incidents.

- The 32% (340,875<sup>1</sup>) of the telephone calls received on non-emergency and administrative lines comprise 27% (163,892<sup>2</sup>) of the total police computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system incidents.
- Community survey responses indicated 65% of respondents expressed apprehension with contacting 911 while still having a path to emergency services if needed, 32% questioned their trust of 911 call-takers to make decisions, while 69% indicated that when a crime is committed, alternative responders are not what the public expects.
- When examining each discipline’s top 12 nature codes, which total 42% (258,727) of the incidents dispatched, 14 out of the 36 nature codes accounted for a total of 49% (126,568) of incidents that may be eligible for an alternative response or co-response.
- Projections suggest that the calls estimated to be eligible for alternative response—across call, CAD, survey data, and Portland 311 (PDX 311)—are an initial 33% eligibility goal for alternative response with another 10% potential for co-response.

## Recommendations

Based on these findings, MCP developed a set of recommendations that constructs a 10-point alternative-response call-allocation strategy with related tactics and expected outcomes, which can be found in Section 3 of the report.



With a **Respond – Resolve – Restore** approach to alternatively allocate calls for service, and based on understanding the complexities of these alternatives, MCP proposes a modern concept of **First Contact Response (FCR)** that promotes timeliness and equitability across all calls for service through policy setting of the expectation that an individual seeking assistance would receive an adequate response on first contact (if electronic) or without being required to talk to more than two people. While the definition of “adequate response” for public safety to react swiftly when a real emergency<sup>3</sup> occurs does not necessarily change, FCR approaches service delivery and call allocation differently. (See Section 3.1 of the report.)

<sup>1</sup> BOEC Director’s Report December 2021 to November 2022 Workload Call Volume

<sup>2</sup> December 2021 to November 2022 CAD extract data – Police Priority 6 and 7 Incidents make up 27% of the total CAD incidents processed (Priority 6 and 7 calls = 163,892 of the 617,875 CAD Incidents)

<sup>3</sup> Based on the police priorities definition, it is presumed that Priority 1 and Priority 2 calls are real emergencies. 17% of all CAD incidents dispatched were Priority 1 or 2. (See Appendix I in the report).

In the future, the FCR—in concert with the collaborative network of teams, programs, and services that specialize in providing community-based responses—will be essential to success. This approach, in coordination with or independent of traditional fire, medical, or police response, may reduce the plethora of services and their access points into no more than two or three easily rememberable connection points (911 and 311, or 911, 311 and a *repurposed* number such as 211 assigned to the Community Services Response Network [CSRN]) that are accessible 24 x 7. (See Section 3.2 of the report.)

This strategy is expected to improve call flow efficiency<sup>4</sup>, reduce unnecessary contacts with fire, medical, and police resources, and increase accountability for the outcomes of decisions made by users of the system.

Across the various existing alternatives—including 911, PDX 311, Portland Street Response (PSR), Public Safety Support Specialist (PS3), Community Health Assess and Treat (CHAT), Community Connect, 211, 988, and others—several practices and response options have already been agreed upon. (See Section 3.3 of the report.) MCP provides a methodology for validating and assessing call typology and response allocation in the report to determine if a nature code is eligible (or not) for independent CSRN resource allocation and/or a co-response with 911 and PDX 311 resources. This approach can be applied across all nature codes.

It is expected that with 911, PDX 311, and the CSRN functioning efficiently—along with proper funding for these programs—simultaneously, police officers' time would free up so their efforts can be redirected to proactive crime prevention and investigatory activities that have reportedly diminished due to the current situations. Improving responses to all community members, including those that have been traditionally marginalized or underserved in communities comprised of people of color, immigrants, those with mental health needs or substance challenges, and those with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, will build a safer Portland for all.

## Conclusion

As public expectations have changed, defining adequate responses has demonstrated itself to be problematic. Portland-specific data demonstrates that what communities, including responders, are insisting upon and expecting do not align with how things “have always been done.” This could be challenging for some to accept, but like other evolutions in the industry since the inception of 911, it is important to listen and find ways to safely address community requirements.

### Estimated Eligible Alternative Response Goal

*The percentage of calls estimated to be eligible for alternative response across call, CAD, survey data, and PDX 311 projections suggests an initial 33% eligibility goal for alternative response with another 10% potential for co-response.*

Achieving alternative goals is transformational change. It is challenging but necessary work to provide timely and appropriate responses in support of our communities' needs. While several recommendations have been provided for the City's consideration, MCP thinks that either a two- or three-number system that can access CSRN resources consistently has the potential to be successful—if implemented with the due care, collaboration, and funding required to bring the City's public safety (in particular police officers) and social justice (i.e., people disproportionately affected or underserved by access to medical, mental health/behavioral health resources) into balance.

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<sup>4</sup> While a multitude of studies are underway to incorporate alternative response in communities across the nation, little if any specific outcomes can be found on the impacts to 911 operations, call flow, and efficiencies. Improved call-flow efficiencies are assumed by MCP when analyzing best possible solutions for Portland given existing resources.