



## **Community Service Boards- Co-Responder Model for Crisis Intervention**

### **What are Community Service Boards?**

- Community Service Boards (CSBs) are public agencies created to provide treatment and care for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders, (jointly referred to as behavioral health) and intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- CSBs serve Georgians who may not have access to private providers due to lack of income or insurance. The underinsured and Medicare/Medicaid recipients are also served by CSBs.
- CSBs were created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1994 and codified in state law (O.C.G.A 37-2-6) as the state's behavioral health safety-net, ensuring all Georgians have access to mental health, substance use, and intellectual/developmental disability services and supports in their community regardless of their ability to pay.

### **Where are Community Service Boards located?**

- There are 22 CSBs in Georgia that together serve all the state's 159 counties; most CSBs serve several counties. No matter where someone lives in Georgia, there is a CSB available to them.
- In many Georgia counties, the local CSB is the only service provider.

### **What is Co-Response?**

- Georgia Law defines a Co-Responder Program as, "a program established through a partnership between a community service board and a law enforcement agency to utilize the combined expertise of peace officers and behavioral health professionals on emergency calls involving behavioral health crises to de-escalate situations and help link individuals with behavioral health issues to appropriate services.
- There are also models that pair law enforcement with other first responders like fire personnel and emergency medical technicians.

### **What is the goal of Co-Responder Programs?**

- De-escalate crisis situations and connect to local services,
- Assist in diverting those in crisis from jail or hospital emergency departments by connecting them with access to a crisis stabilization unit or CSB safety net of services, and
- Increase access to care and promote engagement with treatment.

### **How many CSBs have Co-Responder Programs?**

- Each of the 22 CSBs is either actively responding to crisis calls or are forming a team to do so.
- There are 35 Co-Responder Programs that have 47 teams responding to crisis calls with first responders across Georgia.
- There are many more first responder agencies that are inquiring about starting a co-responder program with their local Community Service Board.

### **Barriers to implementing Co-Response Programs**

- Lack of sustainable State or Federal Funding
- Expiration of federal funding that will require teams to cease operating without continued funding
- Lack of available workforce for both law enforcement and mental health professionals
- Lack of training for co-responders that will be staffing a co-responder team

*For more information, please contact GACSB Deputy Director Jesse Hambrick at 770-490-5182 or [jhambrick@shpllc.com](mailto:jhambrick@shpllc.com).*



## Highlights from the 2024 DBHDD Co-Responder Program Annual Report

<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/organization/be-informed/reports-performance/co-responder-annual-report>

### Summary of Stakeholders Surveyed:

- ✓ Co-Responder programs effectively manage crises, preventing unnecessary incarcerations.
  - ✓ Strong law enforcement relationships are crucial for Co-Responder success.
- ✓ Challenges include staffing difficulties and limited resources, especially in rural areas.

### Summary of Data Collected:

- Notably, arrests are infrequent, with emerging data from Georgia sites showing that **only 2.6% of encounters end in arrest**, reflecting a preference for rehabilitative over punitive measures.
- **Assistance is extended to a diverse group of individuals.** Georgians of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds have been benefactors of co-response, demonstrating an inclusive approach. The program also supports other demographics, including juveniles, and veterans, ensuring a wide-ranging impact. Homeless individuals represent 17% of those served by co-responders demonstrating the vulnerabilities of this group. This highlights the **importance of providing targeted support and resources to address the complex needs of homeless individuals**, who often face barriers to accessing services.
  - Referrals to community resources are the most frequent outcome, with **roughly 41% of cases resulting in individuals being connected to community resources**, reflecting a strong reliance on local support networks and services.
  - The outcome "Resolved on Scene" which is approximately 27% of the total interactions, indicates that many situations are being dealt with immediately and on-site, without the need for further referrals or services. It also reflects the **capability of the responding teams to provide immediate solutions or support.**
  - **Referrals to CSB services and emergency rooms account for approximately 24% of outcomes.** The data underscores the necessity of having access to more intensive care options and the seamless integration of these services with initial response efforts.
- **Voluntary admissions lead at 58.97%**, illustrating a preference or capability for individuals to seek help on their terms while 41.03% require involuntary admissions.

DBHDD recommends that **\$238,235** be considered an appropriate standard budget for a Co-Responder program capable of complying with the goals of SB 403. This amount would allow for staffing a Co-Responder program with three CSB employee roles to partner with peace officer team members.

**\*GACSB notes that this amount is an average based on one co-response team and does not reflect changes in market rates for staffing and community needs.**

As of June 2023, DBHDD is aware of 44 law enforcement agencies wanting to partner with their local CSB to offer constituents Co-Responder services. At the recommended funding level, the total annual cost to meet SB 403 mandates would be approximately **\$10.5M.**