

Urbana Alternative Response Task Force Meeting - November 6, 2025

The Alternative Response Task Force (ARTF) met in their first session on November 6, 2025 at the Independent Media Center. Mayor DeShawn Williams welcomed the task force and emphasizing the importance of stakeholder input in shaping the alternative response model. The Stakeholders were asked to introduce themselves and share what they are most excited for from this process.

Stakeholders introduced themselves:

- Lisa Wilson (Refugee Center): excited about cultural and linguistic access.
- Matthew Fletcher (Courage Connection): wants to give community members what they ask for to service a diverse community.
- Steven Doggett (Urbana Fire): wants to understand the variety of alternative responses.
- Larry Boone (Urbana Police): excited to see what the data shows about citizens' needs.
- Maryalice Wu (City Council): excited about everyone's ideas to improve community response.
- Jaya Kolisetty (RACES): excited about crafting options for sexual and domestic violence survivors.
- Darcy Sandefur (Urbana City Clerk): looking forward to the impact on public safety.
- Daut'e Martin (LEAP): excited to learn from Urbana and apply it to other cities.
- Tom Thompson (LEAP): excited to develop something unique to serve Urbana citizens.
- Charles Davidson (First Followers Reentry Program): hopes it will save money.
- Minnie Pearson (NAACP): there to learn and help, paying close attention to the data.
- Olivia Jovine (Community Development Services): excited to learn and hear how community voices can shape public policy.
- Jessica Vela (OSF Heart of Mary Emergency Department): wants to see how to service and support patients and share available resources.
- Melissa Pappas (Rosecrance Behavioral Health): excited to dive into the data to create a program that keeps staff and the community safe.

- Betsy Smith (METACAD): curious to find out how all the folks fit together for the right response at the right time.
- Danielle Chynoweth (Cunningham Township Supervisors Office): supports unhoused residents wants to ensure residents are supported and connected to appropriate services not just pushed aside.
- Lynn Canfield (Mental Health Board): wants to brag about what's working in the community.
- Stephanie Stewart-Cockrell (The Well Experience): supports the holistic development and growth of families.

Amos Irwin presented data from October 2024 to September 2025, including every call for service handled by Urbana Police. The top call types included remove subject, domestic, check welfare, police alarm, and meet complainant. Call narratives can provide additional context. The narratives are notes taken by the call taker while on the call.

Call types were classified into eight categories: in progress and serious crime (21%), report taking calls, rapid assist (14%), alarms, towing and roadway assistance, other, non-violent conflict (30%), behavioral health needs, and suspicious activity.

There was a question of whether there is one person who could be an expert in the variety of calls. The consultants responded that every different type of call would benefit from a different set of skills.

Domestic violence calls were assigned to "in progress and serious crime" for the purposes of the chart shared in the presentation slides.

Amos explained the different program types utilized in other cities. The co-responder program pairs an officer and a mental health clinician to handle mental health-related calls. Report-taking calls can often be handled without sending an officer to the scene. False alarm reduction programs can save police bandwidth.

Next steps for data analysis include reviewing a larger random sample of call narratives and comparing them to situations handled by community responder programs in other cities.

The presentation included case studies of alternative response programs in other cities:

- **Dayton Mediation Response Unit (MRU):** Started in 2022. Responders are trained civilians responding to calls related to conflict and service connection. Dispatched by 911.

- **Evanston CARES Program:** Started in July of last year. Trained responders handle calls related to mental health, service connection, and conflict resolution. Dispatched by 911.
- **Durham HEART:** Sends out three different teams depending on the need: co-response, crisis intervention, and community responder. Responds to mental health, conflict resolution, service connection, substance use, and suspicious person calls. Dispatched by 911.

A question was asked regarding who had the real decision-making power, and the response was that it is left up to the city council and mayor. A question was asked regarding how the impacted communities were able to be part of the conversation, and it was responded that as long as the stakeholders are willing and able and have the connections and are willing to connect LEAP to the people, they will talk to them in order to shape the recommendations to be people centered.

A question was asked regarding if there has been a reduction of racial disparities in stops, arrests, use of force, or citations in other cities due to these programs. The response was that the field is fairly new and the team is still working on gathering the data to analyze this.

LEAP provided a few discussion questions for the stakeholders: What concerns do you have about community responder programs?

- Staff safety
- Liability questions
- Logistical issues with call screening
- The risk of other authorities imposing a model without any concern for the work that's already been done
- If the teams are going out to support people, we need to make sure we have the resources to provoke real change.

Next steps include one-on-one meetings with the LEAP consultants, looking at existing community resources, and doing a much deeper dive into the data. The next meeting will be December 11th, 2025, at 3:30 PM. Full presentation slides can be found [here](#). The full meeting can be watched [here](#).