

Call-Taking Protocol Assessment for Alternative Response Programs

How do you know if the protocols used by the agencies involved in alternative crisis response programs are sufficient to determine which responder is appropriate?

This protocol assessment tool can be used for dual purposes. When answers to the questions below are not addressed in existing protocols, this indicates potential points of confusion for call takers and/or dispatchers. In addition, the answers to these questions can be used to compare to operations of call centers engaging in similar pilots in other jurisdictions.

General Questions about the Alternative Response Program

1. Who comprises the team?
2. What are the program's hours of operation?
3. How is the program accessed by members of the public?
4. Does the program involve or provide follow-up services?

Determining Call Eligibility for the Alternative Response Program

5. What are the program's eligibility criteria?
 - a. Which agency(ies) is/are responsible for determining if a call is eligible for an alternative response?
6. What codes/incident types are eligible for alternative response?
7. What are the geography-based eligibility criteria?
 - a. How is geographic eligibility determined?
 - b. Who is in charge of making the determinations?
8. What are the criteria that might cause a call, otherwise eligible for alternative response, to be excluded (e.g., if the call involves violence)?
9. How are criteria that would cause a call to be excluded from the program defined? For example, if calls are not eligible due to violence, how is "violence" defined?

10. If not 24/7, what are the program's hours of operation?
11. What happens to eligible 911 calls that occur outside of programmatic operating hours?
12. What happens to eligible callers who call outside of program operating hours?
13. How is eligibility information logged/noted by call takers while on the call?

Guidance for 911 Professionals Determining Whether to Send Alternative Response

14. At the initiation of the call, do call takers ask questions about the mental health of the caller or the person about whom the call is made?
15. Are call takers given clear instructions to identify if a call is eligible for an alternative response?
16. Is there a separate decision tree for call takers and dispatchers to use for each of the eligible incident types to determine if the alternative response should be dispatched?
17. If certain otherwise eligible calls are excluded for some reason (e.g., violence), are call takers and dispatchers given guidance on how to make exclusionary assessments?
18. If a call taker has determined a call is eligible for alternative response, how do dispatchers determine whether to dispatch the alternative response team?
19. If call takers indicate that a call is eligible for an alternative response, are dispatchers *required* to dispatch that alternative response team, or do they have discretion to decide otherwise?
20. Do caller requests for specific types of response (e.g., police officers or alternative responders) factor into the determination that a call is eligible for alternative response or the decision whether to dispatch alternative response?
21. How do call takers and dispatchers ensure and log that a call is within the geographic area eligible for alternative response?
22. How do dispatchers respond to on-scene requests from alternate responders for additional resources, such as the police?