

Attachment A

MEMO TO: REDMOND CITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Recap and Update on Non-Law Enforcement Alternative Response Team

FROM: Darrell Lowe, Police Chief

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This staff report provides a detailed overview of Redmond's evolving approach to non-law enforcement alternative response models. Since launching its Co-Responder Program in 2018, the City has steadily expanded its behavioral health service capacity. Given the emergence of a fully operational and County-funded Mobile Rapid Response Crisis Team (MRRCT) now serving Redmond, City staff recommend deferring the hiring of budgeted Alternative Response positions until the MRRCT program can be fully evaluated. The report outlines historical actions, current challenges, and provides justification for the proposed course correction to ensure resource alignment and regional coordination.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council with a comprehensive overview of the historical context, current landscape, and proposed solution regarding Redmond's approach to non-law enforcement alternative response. The goal is to ensure appropriate service delivery for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises or other non-criminal emergencies through a dedicated civilian-based response framework.

II. BACKGROUND & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The question of whether police officers are the appropriate first responders for behavioral health and low-risk public distress calls has gained significant attention in recent years. Redmond has been at the

forefront of addressing this issue through several initiatives:

2018 Launch of Co-Responder Program

The Redmond Police Department implemented a Co-Responder Program embedding a licensed Mental Health Professional (MHP) within patrol operations.

2021–2024 Expansion to a Tiered Community Health Model

The City broadened its alternative response network through THRIVE and Human Services efforts, which include:

- Homeless Outreach Specialist
- Mobile Integrated Health (MIH)
- Community Care Coordinators (CCC)

III. CURRENT NEED

Redmond Police officers are routinely dispatched to calls involving welfare checks, public intoxication, non-imminent suicidal ideation, emotionally disturbed persons, and chronic 911 callers, calls that rarely require police intervention. These are situations that demand behavioral health expertise, time, and a trauma-informed approach capabilities outside traditional police training.

The embedded MHP position has remained unfilled for over two years. During the last biennial budget process, Council's Alternative Crisis Care Subcommittee agreed to fund non-law enforcement response positions within Planning and Human Services. However, since then, a robust external solution has emerged that warrants full Council consideration before any hiring occurs.

IV. IDENTIFIED SOLUTION: KING COUNTY MRRCT

The Mobile Rapid Response Crisis Team (MRRCT) operated by Sound Behavioral Health and funded by the King County Mental Health

Levy offers a field-ready, 24/7 alternative. Based at the Together Center in Redmond, this team is dispatched via the 988 Crisis Connections line to respond to behavioral health crises without requiring police involvement.

Team Composition:

- Licensed Mental Health Professional (MHP)
- Social Worker or Crisis Responder
- Certified Peer Counselor

Key Program Details:

- Staffing: 40 personnel (projected to 8 per shift)
- Response Time: Within 15 minutes
- Call Volume: 450 calls since December 2, 2024
- Dispatch: Through 988/Crisis Connections; accepts transfers from 911 and non-emergency dispatch
- Coverage: Full East King County service, based locally in Redmond
- Transport Capabilities:
 - Equipped vans with partitions, Starlink internet, GPS, hygiene supplies, and digital dispatching
 - Able to transport individuals to services or next-day appointments

Funding & Oversight:

- Funded through a 7-year King County levy
- Staff regularly engage with local governments to provide updates and ensure alignment with community needs.

V. NEXT STEPS & INTEGRATION PLAN

Staff will monitor and evaluate the MRRCT's effectiveness in addressing non-criminal emergency calls, including how it complements the City's existing Co-Responder, MIH, and CCC programs. Performance indicators and community outcomes will be shared in quarterly Committee of the Whole (COW) updates.

VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff strongly recommends pausing the hiring of the budgeted Alternative Response positions approved for 2025–2026 until the MRRCT program can be fully assessed. Premature hiring may result in duplicative services, unnecessary expenditures, and organizational misalignment.

The MRRCT is already operational, fully funded, and actively serving Redmond residents with a proven, scalable model. The prudent course of action is to allow this program to continue while City staff collect data and evaluate long-term integration potential.