

Duluth Indigenous Commission
Monday, April 19, 2021
Virtual WebEx Meeting

Commissioners present: Phoebe Davis, Roxanne DeLille, Kassie Helgerson, Cayla Bellanger DeGroat, Rochelle Goodrich, Moira Villiard

Commissioners absent: Babette Sandman, Carol Deverney, Amber Lightfeather

Staff present: Kathy Wilson, Mollie Hinderaker

Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, two Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes: bezhig (“one”) indicates who made the motion and niizho (“two”) indicates who seconded the motion.

1. Call to Order and Introductions

- Co-chair Helgerson called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM, introductions were made.

2. Approval of March 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes

- Commissioner Davis bezhig/Commissioner Bellanger DeGroat niizho to approve. Motion passed 5:0. One Commissioner wasn't present for the vote.

3. Public Comments

- City Staff updated the Commission that no comments were received prior to the meeting
- Representatives from the Duluth Police Department's Mental Health Unit were attending the meeting to discuss their work with the Commission. Head of the Unit, Sergeant Greenwalt, was in attendance as well as one of the imbedded social workers, Patty Whelan. Discussion items included:
 - A summary of the Unit: The Mental Health Unit consists of two police officers trained for crisis intervention, two social workers, and soon they will have a registered nurse. The Unit has been around since 2017 and both representatives at the meeting had been on the team for about four or five years. Their overarching goal is to decriminalize mental illness and reduce prison populations that would be better served with mental health services. The Unit coordinates with the broader police department by receiving referrals and does community outreach to stay connected with other organizations and groups working to serve people experiencing mental health crises.
 - A Commissioner had questions on how the Unit is addressing fear of the police/law enforcement? Is the Unit working with any homeless advocacy groups on how to build relationships with people who are homeless and have mental health complications? Representatives from the Unit responded that they work closely with CHUM and recognize that fear of law enforcement is an issue they continually address by building relationships. One of the benefits of the Mental Health Unit is that they are a conduit for this connection back to help when people might have fallen “off the radar or between the cracks”.

- Another Commissioner asked about how the Unit is addressing police officers that don't interact well with people in crisis? The representatives responded that they have a goal of having all officers equipped with crisis intervention training. So far about two out of three officers are trained. When hiring/interviewing officers they aim for each person to have a diverse skill set. Emphasis on a strong skillset in communication, relationship building, and working well under pressure is essential when responding to someone in crisis.
- Andrew Slade with MN Environmental Partnership came to the Commission last summer to get guidance on how nonprofits could better engage with Indigenous communities. The Partnership group recently put on an event discussing this topic and thanked the Commission for providing insight and helping guide that discussion. In the future they are looking to do a similar event that focuses on environmental organizations.

4. City Reports and Updates

- Updates/comments from City Councilors or City Staff
 - No discussion

5. New business

- Discuss and Finalize Resolution to support Rights of Nature Group
 - A representative from the Rights of Nature Group (now named Waankam), Lisa Fitzpatrick, was at the meeting to thank the Commission for sending the draft resolution to support the group's efforts to protect the St. Louis River estuary. Prior to the meeting she sent a few proposed changes for the Commission to review. Fitzpatrick also announced that the group is having a small gathering this weekend to do a soft launch of the project at Chambers Grove and that she will follow up with details.
 - Commissioner Davis bezhig/Commissioner DeLille niizho to approve the resolution with suggested changes. Motion passed 6:0. City staff will edit the document to make the approved changes and send the final version to the Commission.
- Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability in Duluth – Duluth Community Safety Initiative (Blair Powless)
 - Blair Powless summarized the work done over the past ten month by the Duluth Community Safety Initiative (DCSI) to write their recently published set of proposals. The basic components of the proposals include: 1) creation of a community led oversight commission 2) conduct a professionally designed and implemented racial bias audit 3) implement community/cop group interactions 4) consider budget changes to fund initiatives 5) create office of violence prevention 6) implement City/DPD cooperation with a local CAHOOTS. Powless stated he was attending the Commission meeting tonight to ask for their support and or get feedback of the proposals and explained that they could respond as individuals or as a full Commission. DCSI's intention is to bring the set of proposals to City Council in May.
 - A Commissioner has a question about funding for the different elements of the proposal. Powless responded that largely the proposal would be funded

by transferring existing police budget funds and that there could also be funding opportunities at the State or Federal level.

- Commissioner DeLille bezhig/Commissioner Bellanger DeGroat niizho to approve the Indigenous Commission's support for the DCSI proposals. Motion passed 6:0. City Staff was directed to write a memo summarizing the Commission's vote to support.

6. Action Items

- No discussion

7. Subcommittees

- AIM/Opioids/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feast (Helgerson)
 - No discussion
- Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing (Villiard)
 - Duluth Public Arts Commision to start sending a representative to attend Indigenous Commission meeting to discuss Chief Buffalo project and other efforts.
- Bylaws
 - City Attorney St. George was in attendance and would like to work with Commissioners to continue rewriting their bylaws. City Staff confirmed that Commissioners Davis and Delille and Co-chairs Helgerson and Sandman will work with St. George. City Staff will coordinate scheduling the first meeting and will send out formerly established and new version of bylaws to all Commissioners.
- Education (Lightfeather)
 - No discussion
- Police
 - Discussion held during public comment period.
 - Duluth Police Department's Opioid Response Team confirmed to attend upcoming June meeting.
- Sacred Sites (Davis)
 - No updates
 - Commissioner Bellanger DeGroat to join subcommittee
- Spirit Mountain (Sandman)
 - No discussion

8. Old Business

- Indigenous Calendar
 - No discussion
- Decolonization and Visibility
 - No discussion

9. Announcements

- Co-chair Helgerson mentioned an email from Co-chair Sandman regarding implementing Ojibwe language signage. City Staff will add this as a topic for the May meeting.

- Commissioner Villiard mentioned that they are continuing to plan for Chief Buffalo mural painting events this summer. She told Commissioners to think about events to coincide with the mural painting.

10. Next Meeting May 17, 2021

- Meeting adjourned 7:05 PM



DATE: April 22, 2021

FROM: Duluth Indigenous Commission

TO: Duluth Community Safety Initiative (DCSI)

RE: Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability in Duluth (released February 2021) by DCSI

At a regular meeting of the Duluth Indigenous Commission on April 19, 2021 Commissioner DeLille *bezbig* (moved) that the Indigenous Commission supports the Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability in Duluth, Commissioner Bellanger DeGroat *niizho* (seconded) the motion. The Indigenous Commission passed the motion in support of the Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability with a quorum of 6 Commissioners present by a vote of 6 for, 0 against, 0 abstaining.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kassie Helgerson".

Kassie Helgerson, Co-Chair
Duluth Indigenous Commission

Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability in Duluth
Duluth Community Safety Initiative (DCSI)

February 2021

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I. Introduction

We, the Duluth Community Safety Initiative (DCSI), intend to reform public safety practices to reflect a profound concern for the dignity and value of every human being. Currently, many of the interactions between public safety officials and citizens are based in distrust and fear. Many people and communities of color continue to experience historical traumas. The work of building a just and equitable society has been distorted by political and cultural disagreement. It is our intention that the relationships between the community and public safety come to be based in a sincere, mutual respect. We believe that each of us has the capacity to cause harm as well as the ability to heal, regardless of the categories that we may fit into, and that healing should be our collective priority and goal.

We value transparency, humility, compassion, and trust. We all want what is best for our community, and we need to be able to see that in each other. We share a common goal to reduce the violence in our community, whether that violence comes from the police or from a citizen. Our hope is to encourage everyone to commit to heal rather than to degrade or punish.

Public safety culture and public safety practices should reflect a sincere respect for the dignity and value of all human beings. The manner in which citizens regard public safety employees should equally reflect such respect. We believe this respect will happen with the shift in public safety practices that we have outlined below.

We understand the need for patience in matters of civic engagement, but we also understand the urgency of making our community a safe place for all of us: lives depend on these efforts. We want to hear and discuss the various perspectives on these issues, and, through these deliberations, we expect to see substantive, positive, actual change in how public safety is performed and regarded in our community.

The summer of 2020 saw a national groundswell of anger and outrage towards police brutality and the murders of black and brown people by police. Duluth residents responded in many ways, including marches, rallies, and a petition with four demands (see [Appendix A](#)). The demands of the petition were as follows:

- A racial bias audit of the Duluth Police Department (DPD)
- A freeze on any future increases in the DPD's budget
- The establishment of a Duluth Office of Violence Prevention
- That the DPD and all law enforcement agencies immediately cease enacting violence on community members

We believe that designating the police force as responsible for issues of homelessness, addiction, mental health crises, and poverty is a blatant mis-appropriation of community resources. We insist that community safety resources do just that: make the community safe, welcoming, and livable for all of us.

Many cities around the country are grappling with the issue of police violence against people of color. Part of police violence can certainly be attributed to the rise of political polarization in our country, but another contributing factor is that police are often sent to confront situations they are neither trained for nor able to resolve. In Minnesota, both the city of Minneapolis and the city of St. Paul have supported putting into place public safety practices that create trust and truly make communities safe, rather than practices that have made them more unstable and dangerous.

We have crafted concrete steps to enacting the demands of the aforementioned petition. Our proposal breaks down the first three demands of the petition into concrete action steps, which would be supervised by an oversight commission and accompanied by an engagement and exchange process between DPD officers and community members. We believe that these action steps will, when implemented, help to foster a just and equitable society where the dignity and value of every human being is respected.

II. Oversight Commission and Officer/Community Engagement and Exchange

Oversight Commission Development

The following document is a collection of research, ideas, and proposals from concerned citizens. We believe that the City of Duluth can best respond to the principles and proposals contained herein by creating a commission tasked with overseeing the implementation of these proposals. An effective and accountable commission would include representation from City staff, the DPD, and community members of color who are established leaders in efforts for police accountability.

In the spirit of ensuring sustainability, effectiveness, and thorough community buy-in, we strongly recommend that the City consult with us, and a diversity of leaders of color when deciding who should be on the commission. The commission should:

- Oversee all steps taken in the processes of enacting these proposals, and ensure that they are enacted properly and effectively,
- Evaluate the feasibility of short, medium, and long-term implementation plans for each of the proposals,
- Seek out all possible resources to aid in implementing the proposals,
- Aid the City in rigorously implementing the proposals in the most timely and efficient way possible,
- Safeguard transparency by providing community access to results and recommendations (data privacy laws to be respected),
- Make concrete recommendations to the Mayor and other relevant departments on how to implement the proposals,
- Communicate with the DCSI on a monthly basis about the commission's progress.

In order to ensure that all voices are represented in not only the commission formation process, but in the DPD as well, we recommend that the DPD identify community partners and engage the larger community through developing antiracist administrative policies and practices. A key step in the antiracist development of an institution is the engagement and inclusion of communities of color in all aspects of its processes. To this end we have gathered best practice guidelines which we would like to see the DPD use as they work to develop antiracist policies and procedures. (See [Appendix B](#))

Officer/Community Engagement and Exchange

We recommend engagements every other month between groups of law enforcement professionals (5-10 people, particularly patrol officers) and groups of interested community members (5-10 people) will meet for two hours to share food and discuss the following for the purpose of creating spontaneous, direct communication between the community and the department:

- What are officers taught about race?
- How do you understand the concept of race, and how does it impact you professionally?
- What are officers taught about the appropriate use of violence?
- What are community perspectives on policing?
- What are officers' responses to those perspectives?
- What do community members want from officers?
- What do officers want from community members?

This process in some ways resembles community trainings that the DPD currently offers to citizens (Duluth Citizen Police Academy). However, this process is intended to be an open, fluid discussion between equally-sized cohorts of citizens and DPD staff (particularly patrol officers), and is not intended to be a presentation or educational instruction on these questions by the department.

III. Racial Bias Audit of the DPD

Racial bias audits have been successfully completed in American cities equal or greater in size than Duluth. A professionally executed racial bias audit brings an unbiased perspective to both public safety and to the citizenry. We believe that the successful execution of a racial bias audit of the DPD will afford much needed clarity on the question of racial bias in DPD practices. A transparent, thorough, professionally executed racial bias audit will build respect and trust. (See Appendix C for examples of successfully completed racial bias audits, and of professional-grade bias auditors)

The successful completion of a racial bias audit will offer city government first-hand experience with bias audits. Therefore, the City will gain an informed perspective on options for future contracting of bias auditors for the purpose of evaluating levels of bias in other departments, and/or bias related to human aspects other than race. This audit will also provide information to the DPD that will help to guide it in its pursuit of excellence.

Professional auditors should be selected by community members. The selection committee should be comprised of at least six Black and/or Indigenous people from the community and one member from each of the following entities: Duluth NAACP Branch, Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial Inc., Indigenous Commission, African Heritage Commission, Citizens Review Board, and Human Rights Commission.

Through the processes of initiating and completing a racial bias audit of the Duluth Police Department the following goals should be met:

- Assess and monitor internal operation, policies, procedures, and practices to detect the presence of implicit bias and systemic racial bias,
- Collect and analyze data related to traffic stops, use of force, and other police/civilian interactions and determine the impact on communities of color,
- Provide recommendations for reforms that eliminate racial and implicit bias within the department,
- Initiate a community-wide forum to announce the racial bias audit and record community perceptions of racial bias in policing,
- Safeguard transparency by providing community access to results and recommendations (privacy laws to be respected).

Data Collection and Organization

a. Data Collection

Data collection should be implemented as part of a comprehensive early warning system, in which police departments, oversight bodies, and the public use the data to monitor the patterns of the department and the behavior of individual officers. This data can (01) help identify potential police misconduct and deter it, (02) function as a means of exoneration for false accusations of police misconduct.

- Time of day stops
- Zoomed out geographical view of stops (location-based GPS)
- Post-stop outcomes/what happens after stops

- Perceived race (reported) vs perceived race (body cam)
- An explanation of the reason for the law enforcement action at each stage of police contact should be required, including whether contraband was found

b. Data Organization

What is the relationship between officers' perceptions of civilians' race and:

- Rates of civilian officer contact
- Arrest rates and the reasons for arrest
- Rates of searches and the reasons for searches
- Use of force

c. Considerations Other Than Race

What is the relationship between officers' perceptions of civilians' race and perceptions of civilians':

- Economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identification
- Sex
- Ability, disability, and mental health
- Living conditions and housing status

IV. DPD Budget Freeze

Our society is currently set up to put the burden of addressing issues such as homelessness, addiction, mental health crises, and poverty on the criminal justice system, and to punish those who suffer from these issues, rather than helping them to heal and succeed. We should focus resources on preventing these societal problems in the first place so that crime can be reduced. We cannot afford to ignore the fact that these issues are the primary cause of the majority of what we consider to be criminal behavior. Reallocating funds to social services that focus on reducing these problems would be a more effective way of addressing them than our current system of criminalizing them.

Let's focus on prevention rather than just response. The City of Duluth currently allocates 25% of its general fund to the DPD. This is less than some comparable cities in Minnesota, such as St. Cloud and Rochester. 25% is about the same amount that Eau Claire, WI allocates. La Crosse, WI allocates just 17% of its budget to its police department. Both Eau Claire and La Crosse have lower crime rates than Duluth. Our research has shown that allocating a higher percentage of funding to police departments does not necessarily correlate with lower crime.

There are alternative models to traditional policing, most notably the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon (see [Appendix D](#)). These alternative models not only respond to potential public safety issues in a more humane and less punitive way (which is a goal in and of itself), they are also viewed as cost-saving measures.

While there are so many opportunities for the City of Duluth to ensure the public safety of its citizens, at this point we ask that the City take the first step toward a more equitable and less punitive system: freeze the DPD budget. By this, we mean:

- That the City not enter into any **new** agreements with the police union that would increase the DPD budget.
- That there is no increase in spending on any one budget category, excluding pre-negotiated agreements with the police union. This includes adding positions to the Police Department.
- That an open, public review of the DPD's current and future budgets be conducted. This will offer citizens and public officials the opportunity to get on the same page regarding the details of the DPD budget, and allow for informed discussion regarding the amending of the budget in the future.

Our end goal is that the City of Duluth develop a feasible alternative model to traditional policing, and that that model be funded in whole or in part by the DPD budget. Until such a model can be developed, we are asking that the City of Duluth demonstrate its commitment to reform by agreeing to freeze the DPD budget.

V. Office of Violence Prevention

We believe that Duluth is well positioned to immediately implement programming modeled after CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on The Streets, see [Appendix D](#)). We stand in solidarity with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Twin Ports Chapter's Racial Justice Working Group and their allies, who have done important research to propose a CAHOOTS model in Duluth. We urge our elected officials to seriously consider a medium-term plan to also implement a full Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), under which a CAHOOTS model could be housed.

Offices of Violence Prevention have been implemented in major cities across the country in a variety of ways. Violence is considered to be a public health issue and OVPs tend to be housed in City Departments of Health. Effective solutions stop violence before it starts, often saving city budgets tens of thousands of dollars. Ideally, each city structures their OVP based on community need and community involvement. (See [Appendix E](#) for examples of regional OVP implementation focal points)

We are interested in a model that provides an alternative to the punitive policing approach, which responds to violence while in progress or after the fact. An OVP would use a community-focused, public health approach to prevent violence and keep communities safe. The goal is to stop the cycle of violence by addressing aggression at three points: (01) prior to a harmful act, (02) at the first indicating sign of aggression, and (03) after the first identifiable incident. An OVP would be responsible for building capacity with community groups and resources, in order to pinpoint, neutralize, and reframe multiple forms of violence.

We suggest that a Duluth OVP would be effective in taking a **public health approach** to reduce:

- Substance abuse, particularly the opioid crisis
- Domestic violence, particularly against women
- Human trafficking, particularly of Indigenous people, women, and children
- Poverty, particularly in communities of color
- Housing instability, particularly in communities of color
- Mental health challenges

Some OVPs take a training and education approach to their work. For example, this can include harm reduction activities such as trainings specifically geared to detect potentially violent events. People learn and utilize informal mediation, non-physical conflict resolution, and interruption expertise to deescalate situations before they become violent.

Other OVPs focus on identifying at-risk groups and intervening in potential cycles of violence while people are still young. For example, some OVPs emphasize case management and mentorship for young people who are at risk of being involved with violence. One example of a cooperative harm reduction effort is where high school coaches use a curriculum to talk with athletes about healthy relationships. This evidence-based model helps prevent dating and relationship violence.

Finally, OVPs can serve as a hub where at-risk groups can find resources and information. For example, a Duluth OVP could serve as a reference point for programs around affordable housing, addiction recovery, and safety for survivors of human trafficking.

Ultimately, a Duluth OVP would need to be created in deep consultation with groups already working on these issues. As a community, we are lucky to have many committed individuals and organizations that are already

making grassroots change. We encourage the City of Duluth to rigorously consult with the people directly impacted by the forms of violence we identified above. Through ongoing consultation and a recognition that violence is not endemic to humanity, we can build a safer Duluth for us all.

VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A

“Duluth Council and Mayor Larson: Increase Police Accountability and Halt Police Spending”

<http://bit.ly/DuluthPoliceAccountability> and originally posted on [Change.org](https://www.change.org)

As Duluth residents watch the senseless murder of another Black man by police, and as peaceful protesters across our nation continue to be brutalized by police departments, we must work in our community to help change the culture of violence police have created across our nation. The death of George Floyd is not an isolated incident. Neither is the death of Breonna Taylor, of Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, or any of the thousands of Black people who have lost their lives at the hands of police in our country. It has become painfully clear that what is needed now is not more training for police, not community policing measures, but real structural change in how we protect our communities. Based on the work of Minneapolis organizations including Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective, we demand that all Duluth city councilors pledge to commit to the following actions:

1. To support a racial bias audit of the Duluth Police Department. This audit would include a look at stops, arrests, complaints, misconduct, and more. Reviewer(s)/Researchers will be selected by community members. The selection committee should be comprised of at least 6 Black and/or Indigenous people from the community and one member from each of the following entities: The Duluth NAACP, Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial Inc., The Indigenous Commission, The African Heritage Commission, The Citizens Review Board, the Human Rights Commission. Funding for the audit would be pulled from the DPD budget. As a sign of the City of Duluth's commitment to addressing the legitimate concerns of the community members, resources to complete this audit will be included in the Duluth Police Department's annual budget. Furthermore, recommendations from this audit would be addressed with priority in subsequent DPD budget years.
2. Freeze/Halt any future increases to the Duluth Police Department's Budget.
3. To protect and expand current investment in community-led health and safety strategies that are independent of police department oversight, funding, or partnership. This includes establishing an Office of Violence Prevention for the City of Duluth.
4. To do everything in the council's power to compel DPD and all law enforcement agencies to immediately cease enacting violence on community members.

Appendix B

DPD Administration Antiracist Development

We believe that DPD should use the following questions (adapted from “Assessing Institutional Racism” by Ottawa United Way) to guide them as they work to develop antiracist policies and procedures:

1. Does your department have a goal to dismantle racism? Is this goal reflected in your decision-making process?
2. Does your department provide support and resources for white staff to develop as anti-racist white allies through working with organizations or campaigns led by people of color?

3. Is your department accountable to people of color organizations and communities who are affected by but not part of the institution?
4. When the budget reflects work to be done in support of people of color communities, do these communities have input on where the money comes from and how it is going to be spent?
5. Are people of color supported in seeking information around issues of internalized racist oppression and self-empowerment either within the department or from outside the department?
6. Are white people supported in seeking information around issues of white privilege and white supremacy either within the department or from outside the department?
7. Are there regular trainings and discussions at varying levels of leadership about dismantling racism and accountability?
8. Does your department provide support and resources for staff of color to develop leadership through working with organizations or campaigns led by people of color?
9. Does your department seek input and guidance from people of color organizations and community leaders of color in its strategic planning and decision making?
10. Does your department advocate for the participation of people of color organizations when working in collaboration with other groups?

It is essential to keep in mind that the structure of an alliance between an anti-racist organization and people of color organizations is fundamental to the success of anti-racist work. Primarily white organizations often come to the table with greater staff capacity and financial resources than people of color organizations. This imbalance of power often undermines the leadership of organizations of color when working in alliance. The rectification of this imbalance should be addressed as the alliance(s) are being formed and maintained.

Identifying Community Partners and Engaging the Larger Community

A key step in the antiracist development of an institution is the engagement and inclusion of communities of color in all aspects of its processes.

1. Identifying Community Partners
 - a. Find out who are the community partners most affected by, concerned with, or have experience relating to the policy, program or initiative
 - b. Identify racial demographics of neighborhood/s and/or those impacted by the issues
2. Once you have identified your community partners:
 - a. Invite and involve them in the issue.
 - b. Work together to define how historically underrepresented community stakeholders can take a leadership role in this policy, program, initiative or budget issue.
 - c. Listen to the community. Ask:
 - i. What do we need to know about this issue? How will the policy, program, initiative or budget issue burden or benefit the community? (concerns, facts, potential impacts)

- ii. What factors produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this issue?
- iii. What are ways to minimize any negative impacts (harm to communities of color, increased racial disparities, etc.) that may result? What opportunities exist for increasing racial equity?

Appendix C

Racial Bias Audits: Background Information

A professionally executed racial bias audit brings an unbiased perspective to both public safety and to the citizenry. The following are examples of successfully completed racial bias audits, and of professional grade bias auditors:

- [Charleston Racial Bias Audit Final Report](#)
- [Albany Racial Bias Audit Final Report](#)
- [Kalamazoo Racial Bias Audit Final Report](#)
- [Article on the Results of the Kalamazoo Audit](#)

CNA

Research and analysis firm that conducted the Charleston and Albany racial bias audits.

3003 Washington Boulevard

Arlington, VA 22201 USA

inquiries@cna.org

703.824.2000

<https://www.cna.org/>

The following organizations jointly presented the '[Minnesota Statewide Racial Profiling Report: Akeley Police Department](#)' in 2003:

Institute on Race & Poverty

www.umn.edu/irp

University of Minnesota Law School

415 Walter Mondale Hall 229 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

(612) 625-8071 - irp@umn.edu

The Council on Crime and Justice

<http://crimeandjustice.org/>

822 South 3rd Street, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55415

(612) 340-5432

Appendix D

CAHOOTS As A First Response in 911 Policing

A number of cities across the country are in the process of developing civilian first-responder programs for their communities. ¹ One well known example of a civilian based program is CAHOOTS, or “Crisis Assistance Helping Out on The Streets,” which has been running successfully for over 30 years in Eugene, Oregon. Following this model, many other cities are now taking the first steps toward meaningful and positive action for the well-being of their communities. ²

As this model demonstrates, the development of such a program offers not only decreased police violence and vital help for those who need it, but also considerable economic benefits for its home city. CAHOOTS has saved an average of \$8 million on public safety and \$14 million for ambulance/emergency room treatment annually. ³ As an official part of the Eugene emergency response system, the program handled 24,000 calls (around 20% of the calls dispatched by 911) in 2019. CAHOOTS is a concrete example of a successful program with more than 30 years of experience and impressive results.

How Does it Work?

Instead of sending police out to every 911 call, a CAHOOTS team, comprised of one medic (either a nurse or EMT) and one crisis worker experienced in behavioral health, is sent to respond to mental health, homelessness and drug use crises. These unarmed teams are intensively trained in emergency medical services and trauma-informed de-escalation techniques. For an overwhelming majority of cases, these tools are all that were needed — in 2019 the teams needed to contact police for further assistance only 150 times, i.e., for less than 1% of their 24,000 calls.

Why is it Necessary?

Adding a crisis intervention program to our local emergency response system can play a huge role in decreasing the risk of police violence. The Office of Research and Public Affairs found that those with untreated mental illness account for at least 25%—or perhaps as many as 50%—of all fatal police shootings. ⁶ They conclude: “Given the prevalence of mental illness in police shootings, reducing encounters between on-duty law enforcement and individuals with the most severe psychiatric diseases may represent the single most immediate, practical strategy for reducing fatal police shootings in the United States.”⁴ Furthermore, a recent local petition created in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder (which has garnered over 3,000 signatures from Duluth area residents) has urged local “investment in community-led health and safety strategies.” The CAHOOTS program is a time-tested, demonstrably successful example of such a strategy.

Conclusion

For these reasons—in line with recent calls for justice nationwide, and in an effort to both decrease the potential for police violence in the Duluth area and to heed urgent calls of community members to invest in community-led safety strategies—we believe it is imperative that local community organizations come together to develop a CAHOOTS-style mobile crisis intervention program, with a BIPOC hiring preference, that can be officially added to our local 911 emergency response system.

Sources

¹ Thompson, Christie. "[This City Stopped Sending Police to Every 911 Call.](#)" The Daily Beast, July 24, 2020.

² Andrew, Scottie. "[This town of 170,000 replaced some cops with medics and mental health workers. It's worked for over 30 years](#)" CNN. July 5, 2020.

³ [CAHOOTS Media Guide](#)

⁴ Office of Research and Public Affairs, "[Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters](#)," December 2015.

Appendix E

Focal points used in regional Offices of Violence Prevention:

[Chicago, IL](#): Programs teach about violence prevention in partnership with community stakeholders

[Des Moines, IA](#): The Office of Disability, Injury & Violence Prevention coordinates unintentional injury programs within IDPH and houses programs that aim to prevent or reduce interpersonal violence. Program staff collaborates with other programs, state agencies and community organizations to address injury and violence using public health strategies.

[Minneapolis, MN](#): The office focuses on supporting youth who may be likely to commit or suffer from violence

[Bismarck, ND](#): Applies a behavioral health lens to our prevention efforts, which helps us to draw the connections between substance abuse and related problems and to take the necessary steps to address these problems in a comprehensive and collaborative way.

[Milwaukee, WI](#): Services which focus on domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, children witness to violence, community violence, gun violence, and interpersonal violence.

Additional Resources

These additional resources offer insight into institutional antiracist work and crisis intervention programs that are currently underway in other parts of the country.

[Austin Will Use Money Cut from Police Budget to Establish Supportive Housing](#)

[Assessing Institutional Racism](#)

[Building Momentum from the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Promoting Justice in Policing](#)

[Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative: Racial Equity Toolkit to Assess Policies, Initiatives, Programs, and Budget Issues](#)

[Officer Contacts with Civilians and Race in the City of Spokane: A Quantitative Analysis](#)

[Law Enforcement Accountability Network \(LEAN\) Duluth](#)