

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE (AR)

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for a Precinct Based Alternative Response (PBAR) to calls for service.
2. **POLICY:** The principle goal is to serve the public in an expedient manner by alleviating the necessity to dispatch an officer for a victim only report, or requiring the victim to make a complaint in person, by maintaining a system for receiving selected crime and incident report information via telephone. An additional goal is to provide security by an armed uniform officer for each precinct during working hours. This system aims to minimize the amount of complaints received from citizens pertaining to the inability to reach an officer by phone or have their messages answered. If an individual wishes to file a report that meets the criteria for AR but insists on the response of a police officer, one will be dispatched.
3. **SCOPE:** This directive is applicable to all personnel employed by the Huntsville Police Department.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** All personnel employed by the Huntsville Police Department (HPD) will comply with this directive.
5. **DEFINITION:** Alternative Response refers to the receiving and recording of certain offenses and miscellaneous reports via the telephone in lieu of an on-scene response by police officers.
6. **PROCEDURE:** Calls will be referred to the Precinct Alternative Response Call Taker (PARCT) for the district where the incident took place. When a crime is alleged, an Incident/Offense Report will be made. Current policy regarding notifications of an HPD Investigator should always be adhered to regardless of the victim's location at the time of the report. The HPD investigator will forward an Incident/Offense Signature Report Sheet (Form 401-8 F1) to the Victim for notarized signature within 72 hours of the report. Follow up investigation of any incident will be at the discretion of the assigned Investigator, with approval by the CID Commander or designee, based on the merits of the case and cooperation of the victim with the follow up investigation.
 - A. **AR as the INITIAL OPTION:** AR reporting will be offered as an Initial Option for a caller under the following circumstances:
 1. When the complainant or victim is unable to meet with an HPD Officer in person due to geographic, medical, or other constraints, but the crime being reported occurred within HPD's jurisdiction and is a felony, OR an

Officer determines the alleged incident is serious enough to warrant that a criminal investigation be initiated; or

2. When the complainant or victim could meet with an HPD Officer to make a report, but there are no suspects present and there is no chance of finding the suspect in the area; there is no injury requiring medical treatment; and there is no indication of any physical evidence at the scene.
3. Examples of qualifying AR calls include but are not limited to:
 - a) Any felony or other crime of a serious nature that occurred within the Huntsville Police Department's jurisdiction but circumstances beyond the victim's or complainant's immediate control prevent or prohibit the victim or complainant from filing a police report in person. In these instances, the Officer should explain that the victim will likely be required to respond to our jurisdiction to pursue prosecution, but the Incident/Offense Report will be taken. The preferred response will be to make the Incident/Offense Report and initiate an investigation.
 - b) Gasoline Drive-offs, Shoplifting, Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle, Stolen driver's license, checks or credit cards, and any other Stolen Property incidents meeting the above criteria;
 - c) Harassment, Harassing Communications and misdemeanor assaults with no injury requiring medical treatment and a known offender;
 - d) Criminal Mischief;
 - e) Private Property Incidents;
 - f) Leaving the Scene of an Accident with no injury;
 - g) Requests to speak with an officer for information; or
 - h) Any other offense where the purpose of the call is only to document the incident for insurance or other purposes.

- B. AR as the LAST OPTION: AR reporting will be offered as a last option for a caller if the person alleging a serious crime is unable or refusing to respond in person to meet with an Officer. In these instances, the Officer should explain that the victim will likely be required to respond to our jurisdiction to pursue prosecution, but the Incident/Offense Report will be taken. The preferred response will be to make the Incident/Offense Report and initiate an investigation. The following call types should generally not be taken by a PARCT when the victim

or complainant is reasonably able to file the report in person by meeting with an HPD Officer:

1. Death, serious physical injury to a person, or assaults with juvenile victims;
2. Rape;
3. Robbery;
4. Missing Persons;
5. Domestic Violence;
6. Burglaries;
7. Theft of any motorized vehicle or watercraft, any trailer, motorized farm or construction equipment, vehicle tag, airplane, or firearm;
8. Any call where after talking with victim, the PARCT believes an officer's on-scene response is required;
9. Any call of an unusual nature, or any call that would meet the criteria of being reported on the Shift Incident Report; or
10. Any call where the citizen specifically requests an officer to be dispatched to the scene.

7. TRAINING

A. HPD COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING: The Services Bureau Commander or designee will facilitate training for Communications Personnel on Alternative Response procedures. Communications Personnel will be trained to efficiently screen acceptable calls for transfer to a PARCT. Training will also emphasize the importance of maintaining the operational integrity of the AR program. Training will include:

1. Indoctrination about the goals and objectives of the AR program.
2. The correct procedures for the screening and transfer of an AR call.
3. Instruction on the advantages of AR program.
4. The type of calls that will be transferred to AR; and the type of calls that will not be transferred to AR.

- B. ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE CALL TAKERS: The Operations Bureau Commander or designee will ensure that the PARCT are trained to screen calls transferred to AR and to complete police case and miscellaneous reports via the telephone. Each serves as first-line contact with the general public and the image that is reflected through this contact is most important. Courtesy, concern, compassion and a professional response must be demonstrated to every caller.
8. SCREENING:
- A. HPD COMMUNICATIONS CALL SCREENING:
 - 1. Communications Personnel will screen calls by asking basic questions (who, what, when, where and why).
 - 2. After determining the caller is reporting an offense meeting AR criteria, Communications will then transfer the caller to the PARCT in whose district the incident took place.
 - 3. Communications Personnel will make every reasonable effort to route AR qualifying calls to a PARCT. In some instances, it may be prudent to briefly explain the AR system and its advantages to those with AR qualifying calls.
 - B. PARCT SCREENING: The PARCT will immediately verify the information with the victim to ensure there is no suspect present and the call meets the criteria for an Alternative Response. Persons reporting an offense or incident by AR should be shown the same patience and courtesy offered to the public by responding officers.
9. REPORT PROCESSING: The PARCT will complete the necessary reports for the victim. Reports generated by the PARCT must meet the same standards as those completed by field officers and should be neat, thorough and accurate. The PARCT will mark the report "AR - North" or the appropriate Precinct designator, in the upper right hand corner to designate its origin and place the appropriate district identifier for the location of the incident in the upper middle portion of the report.
- A. The PARCT will contact Communications via phone to obtain the appropriate report numbers, place them on the report, and relay any BOLO information for dissemination to field officers if appropriate.
 - B. The call taker will then notify Communications when the event can be closed out.
 - C. All reports will be reviewed and signed by a sworn supervisor and forwarded to Records Division.

10. OFFICER RESPONSE:

- A. EMERGENCY RESPONSE: In the event the PARCT perceives there is a threat to the victim's safety, he or she will immediately notify Communications via radio and request that an officer(s) be dispatched to the appropriate location. The PARCT should obtain all pertinent suspect information (location, offender's description, weapons involved etc.) and provide the information to communications. Keep the complainant on the line until officers arrive on the scene.
- B. NON-EMERGENCY RESPONSE: If the PARCT determines that an officer's presence is required, but the response is of a non-emergency nature:
 - 1. The PARCT will transfer the call back to Communications, to obtain all the pertinent information and dispatch officers to the location.
 - 2. The decision to dispatch on a call referred to PARCT rests with the officer and that decision will not be questioned by Communications Personnel.
- C. DISPATCHED CALLS: Once the call is dispatched, the officer will respond to the scene and complete any required paperwork regardless of call classification.

11. REFERRAL ASSISTANCE: It may be necessary to assist the complainant by making referrals. These referrals may be to other persons in the Department or to an outside agency.

- A. INTERNAL: Referrals include but are not limited to Internal Affairs, Precinct Administrative and Investigative Offices (i.e., Major Crimes, STAC Unit, and General Investigations Units, Community Relations Officers, Traffic Services Unit, School Resource Officers, or support units such as Records or Technical Services).
- B. OUTSIDE: Referrals include but are not limited to the Madison County Jail, Help Line, Hope Place, Crisis Services of North Alabama, Wellstone Behavioral Health and the Madison County Health Department. When appropriate, referrals may be made to other departments of City or County government.

12. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS: The PARCT will be housed in each Precinct at a location that has access to the main lobby area. This will provide security and allow officers to handle citizen walk in reports. The PARCT will be operational from 0630 until 1700 Monday through Friday (after 1700 hours calls will be dispatched to field units). AR will not take place on weekends or City holidays. Shift Commanders will be responsible for ensuring that the PARCT is manned during operational hours. These duties will be Precinct specific for each shift during operational hours. The staffing levels

can be adjusted according to demand for service and availability of personnel. The Precinct Commander or designee will designate day-to-day operation and supervision of the AR program. If an officer is on physical light duty they will not be permitted to work PARCT.