

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is ARC?

- Alternative Response to Crisis (ARC) is a City of Cincinnati program designed to help those in crisis using the most appropriate and least invasive intervention available, including such initiatives as: (1) diverting Cincinnati 911 calls to 988 Lifeline Providers, when appropriate; (2) seeking the assistance of a 988 Lifeline Provider with Cincinnati 911 caller de-escalation while a traditional police/fire/EMS response is on the way; (3) sending an ARC Response Team, consisting of a behavioral health specialist and a medical professional, in lieu of a traditional law enforcement response, to check someone's welfare, address basic needs issues, or provide connection to services; or (4) dispatching a Mobile Crisis Team co-responder clinician along with law enforcement to high-risk mental health crises.

2. What is the ARC Response Team?

- A pilot Response Team has been established, as part of the Alternative Response to Crisis (ARC) program, to function as a 911-dispatchable resource for low-risk crisis situations. This is a collaborative effort between the Cincinnati Emergency Communications Center, Cincinnati Fire Department, and Cincinnati Health Department.
- This two-person team consists of a Cincinnati Health Department (CHD) Behavioral Health Specialist and a Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) Firefighter/Paramedic. During operating hours, the team is used by the 911 center as an Alternative Response to conduct welfare checks, assist with basic needs, and refer or connect individuals with community service providers. The City of Cincinnati's 911 center (the Emergency Communications Center, or ECC) will evaluate calls received to determine if the call is appropriate for an alternative response.

3. What is the Alternative Response model?

- Alternative Response refers generally to the model of response in which a team designed to address mental health, substance abuse, or other crises, is dispatched to address such crises in lieu of a traditional law enforcement response.
- In the City of Cincinnati, the ARC Response Team is being piloted as an alternative, dispatchable resource to be sent by ECC to some low-risk, low-acuity crisis situations.

4. What is the Co-Responder model?

- Co-Responder refers generally to the model of response that includes at least one law enforcement officer and one mental health or substance abuse professional responding jointly to situations in which a behavioral health crisis is likely to be involved.
- In the City of Cincinnati, the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT), operated by UC Health, is comprised of mental health professionals that respond along with CIT-trained Cincinnati Police Department officers to some behavioral health crises. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is a program for first responders focused on safe and effective interaction with persons who are in crisis.

5. When is the pilot for the ARC Response Team?

- The ARC Response Team will be piloted for six months, beginning in late July 2022.

Frequently Asked Questions

6. What are the operating hours of the ARC Response Team?

- During the initial three months of the pilot program, the team has been funded to provide 40 hours of service per week, and will operate from 8:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday through Friday. During the fourth through sixth month of the pilot program, the team has been funded to provide up to 60 hours of service per week. The steering committee will use data gathered during the pilot to inform decisions about operational hours during the pilot, and for consideration of any future extension or expansion of the program.

7. To what types of calls is the ARC Response Team dispatched?

- The team responds to low-risk calls where individuals are not in imminent risk. The team deals with low level behavioral health crises and issues that arise from public health needs and poverty. Some examples are: trespass calls, welfare checks, intoxicated parties, and mental health crises.

8. What services does the ARC Response Team provide?

- The ARC Response Team provides crisis de-escalation, connection, and system navigation. The greater Cincinnati area has a deep pool of service providers and organizations well suited to help people. Sometimes, a barrier to help is simply not knowing who can help. A primary goal of the ARC Response Team is to connect people to services that can help address their needs.

9. How is the ARC Response Team dispatched?

- The ARC Response Team is dispatched through 911 (the Cincinnati Emergency Communications Center or ECC). The role of the civilian 911 call-takers and dispatchers at ECC is to triage calls and send the most appropriate available response. The calls are screened for safety and appropriateness.
- Based on defined criteria, when a call is eligible for the ARC Response Team (in lieu of a police response), the call-taker will flag this eligibility. When a flagged call record is routed to a police dispatcher, the dispatcher will evaluate whether there is an ARC Response Team on duty in that area. If yes, the call will be dispatched to the team. If the team is not on duty or would not be able to respond in a reasonable period of time, police will be dispatched.

10. What does the ARC Response Team do in between 911-dispatched calls for service?

- In addition to functioning as a 911-dispatchable resource, the team will roam its geographic service area to look for opportunities to self-initiate activity (e.g., checking on the welfare of people in public spaces, or following up with those they have encountered previously).

11. Where does the ARC Response Team respond?

- The ARC Response Team will cover various areas of the City of Cincinnati during the six-month pilot program. The project team has examined past police call volume that was classified in such a way that the call may have been eligible for assistance from the ARC Response Team. We know from this data that there are a number of Cincinnati neighborhoods that have a substantial Alternative Response need.

Frequently Asked Questions

- The pilot program funds a single team during limited service hours for a six-month period. A single team cannot effectively respond to calls on a citywide basis, because it would result in a long response time.
- As a result, the team must focus on particular neighborhoods and districts on any particular day. One goal of the pilot is to collect data on service needs, in terms of time or day, day of week, geography; this would inform decisions about future service parameters, including the operating hours, response areas, and the number of teams needed to provide citywide coverage.

12. What does the ARC Response Team look like?

- One goal of the ARC Response Team is to de-escalate situations, or avoid unnecessary escalation, by responding as an alternative to law enforcement. The non-threatening appearance of the team, in terms of their vehicle and team member attire, is one aspect of this approach. The vehicle used by the team is intentionally not marked in a fashion similar to CPD or CFD vehicles, and it will not be equipped with flashing red/blue lights or an audible emergency siren. The attire of team members will generally consist of professional but casual street attire. For identification, team members will wear an ARC photo identification card on a lanyard.

13. Why isn't the ARC Response Team available 24-hours per day?

- The ARC Response Team is a pilot program designed to operate during limited hours, for the purposes of collecting data and learning while delivering this new service. The pilot will help demonstrate whether such a service is needed in Cincinnati beyond the six-month pilot, in terms of hours of service, and geographic coverage area.

14. Is there a cost for someone to receive ARC Response Team services?

- No. The ARC Response Team provides a broad range of no cost services such as providing information and referrals, crisis intervention, counseling, transportation to another service provider, and social service needs.

15. Does the ARC Response Team have a police role or include a police officer on the team?

- No, ARC Response Team members are not armed and do not perform any law enforcement duties. This program is an alternative response and will not be used as a substitute for situations which require a law enforcement presence and will not respond to incidents which involve violence or life-threatening medical situations.

16. Are the ARC Response Team and Mobile Crisis Team the same entity, or duplicative?

- No, the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) is a service offered by UC Health. MCT often responds along with Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) officers in a co-responder capacity to high-risk crisis situations which require a law enforcement presence. The ARC Response Team does not replace the CPD co-responder program or MCT, but rather is an additional resource to help address mental health, substance abuse issues, and the community's low-risk crisis needs. The ARC Response Team pilot is being established to respond to calls that are not currently handled by the MCT/CPD co-responder program.

Frequently Asked Questions

17. Who is managing the ARC Response Team pilot?

- The ARC Response Team is a pilot program that is a collaboration between the City of Cincinnati's City Manager's Office, Emergency Communications Center, Fire Department, and Health Department. The pilot has been developed by a steering committee consisting of representatives of these four agencies and has been guided with input from a community stakeholder group.

18. Who is paying for the ARC Response Team pilot?

- Primarily, the City of Cincinnati is funding the six-month pilot program with general fund dollars. The Health Department has secured a grant to cover a portion of the pilot's expenses.

19. Does the ARC Response Team respond to medical emergencies?

- The ARC Response Team is not a replacement for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). If Cincinnati 911 receives a report of a medical emergency, those incidents will continue to receive a traditional EMS response. One member of the two-person ARC Response Team is a paramedic from the Cincinnati Fire Department. In the course of the team's duties, they may encounter individuals with minor medical issues, and this paramedic will be able to assess and triage those issues. If a serious medical emergency is encountered, the team will request an EMS response from the Cincinnati Fire Department. While EMS is on the way, the ARC paramedic will provide immediate life-saving interventions, such as CPR, defibrillation with an AED, or resuscitation of an overdose victim using naloxone.

20. Can a caller request an ARC Response Team?

- The team has been designed to provide an alternative to a law enforcement response for situations in which such an alternative is safe and more appropriate than traditional public safety responses. The Emergency Communications Center's 911 call-takers and dispatchers are trained to interview callers, triage all calls received, and send the most appropriate available response. Callers need only to describe the situation and answer the call-takers questions; the decision to flag an incident as appropriate for alternative response is criteria-based, and a caller's request for a particular type of response does not weigh in to sending what is most appropriate.