

# REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY

## DESIGNING A REIMAGINED SYSTEM

### Models from the Field – Mediation Response

Each day across the country, thousands of people call 911 to report social conflicts and quality of life concerns, such as:

- Noise complaints, including barking dogs, heavy construction, loud parties and/or music;
- Perceived misuse of public space, including loitering or congregating in parks or on s;
- Disruptive or erratic behavior by individuals experiencing a behavioral or mental health issue;
- Animal complaints, such as pets being off leash; and
- Disputes between neighbors and/or roommates over the condition or use of a property.

Though not necessarily related to true public safety emergencies, these types of conflicts and concerns can persist and intensify over time if unresolved, ultimately corroding relationships between individuals or whole communities.

Responding to inter-personal and inter-communal conflict consumes a significant amount of police time and resources, while often leaving underlying issues to fester.

#### Mediation Response Unit (MRU)

To address the significant volume of disputes that do not require the presence of an armed officer, the city of Dayton, Ohio launched its Mediation Response Unit (MRU) in 2022. MRU responders, who are trained in conflict resolution, de-escalation, and mediation, are dispatched to low-level, non-emergent calls for service, such as neighborly conflicts, noise complaints, loitering and trespassing, animal complaints, and similar non-violent issues. At the conclusion of an on-scene response, the MRU team can connect residents to case management, follow-up, and resources as necessary.

MRU responders deploy directly via 911 and a direct line for residents to use. If 911 callers are uninterested in receiving MRU's services, they are able to request an officer response instead. In addition, the MRU vehicle is equipped with radio and computer technology that allows mediators to view the 911 call log directly. As a result, MRU responders are not limited only to dispatch from the 911 center and can choose themselves to respond to a broader set of calls.

In the program's first three months, during which it operated Monday through Friday between 11:00 AM and 7:00 PM, MRU responded to more than 400

calls for service. Of these, only 3 percent required officer back up.<sup>1</sup> Also notably, only 4 percent of callers requested a police officer response instead of MRU. Importantly, MRU's inception was the product of local stakeholders and residents coming together to advocate for alternative responses to non-criminal issues occurring in the community.

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1 Frolik, Cornelius. (August 22, 2022). Dayton's Mediation Option for Some Police Calls Gets High Marks, May Expand. Dayton Daily News. <https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/daytons-mediation-option-for-some-police-calls-gets-high-marks-may-expand/W244ZWXWBBFG5PX5DI44ZE6BEE/>

## Additional Resources

[The Policing of Social Conflict](#)