

B* HEARD

Transforming NYC's Response to Mental Health Crises FIRST THREE MONTHS OF OPERATIONS

On June 6, 2021, New York City launched a pilot program in which both mental and physical health professionals are responding to 911 mental health emergency calls for the first time in our history. This new approach, called B-HEARD - the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division - reflects New York City's commitment to treat mental health crises as public health problems, not public safety issues, whenever possible.

B-HEARD teams include emergency medical technicians/paramedics from the Fire Department's Emergency Medical Services and social workers from NYC Health + Hospitals. Teams operate seven days a week, 16 hours a day in the 25, 28, and 32 police precincts in East Harlem and parts of central and north Harlem. In 2020, there were approximately 8,400 mental health 911 calls in this area (Zone 7), the highest volume of any dispatch zone in the city. **During the 16 hours a day when B-HEARD teams were operational from June 6 – August 31, 2021, there were approximately 18 mental health 911 calls each day in Zone 7.**

The goals of the B-HEARD pilot are to:

- **Route 911 mental health calls to a health-centered B-HEARD response whenever it is appropriate to do so.** Calls that involve a weapon, an imminent risk of harm, or where NYPD or EMS call-takers know that an individual has an immediate need for a transport to a medical facility will continue to receive a traditional 911 response—an ambulance and police officers.
- **Increase connection to community-based care, reduce unnecessary transports to hospitals, and reduce unnecessary use of police resources.**

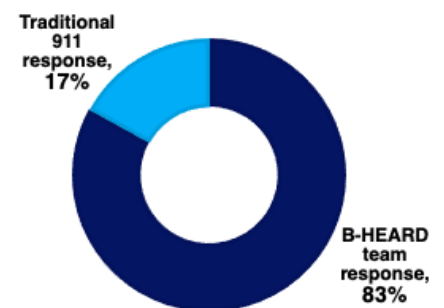
Before B-HEARD, mental healthcare was not delivered in communities during an emergency. Instead, emergency medical technicians/paramedics provided basic medical assistance in the field and transported those who needed mental healthcare to a hospital. Now, with B-HEARD social workers delivering care on site, **emergency mental healthcare is reaching people in their homes or in public spaces for the first time in New York City's history.**

This brief summarizes data from the first three months of B-HEARD's operations (June 6 – August 31, 2021):

In the first three months of the pilot:

- 911 operators (both NYPD and EMS) **routed 23% of mental health 911 calls (342 calls) to B-HEARD teams.** This number is projected to grow to approximately 50% of all 911 mental health calls. Remaining calls will involve individuals who require immediate transport to a hospital, risk of imminent harm to themselves or others, or situations where EMS call-takers do not have enough information to assess risk of imminent harm.
- **B-HEARD teams responded to approximately 83% of all calls routed to them (283 total calls).** The remaining calls received the traditional response by NYPD and EMS, typically because the B-HEARD teams were unavailable, responding to another call.

B-HEARD teams are responding to 83% of calls routed to B-HEARD by 911



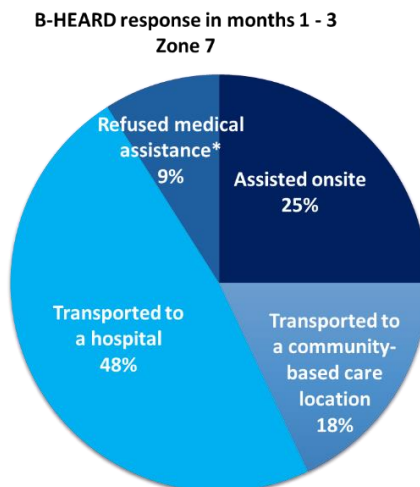
Compared to traditional 911 response, more people are accepting assistance from B-HEARD teams

- In 91% of cases, people accepted assistance from B-HEARD teams, higher than 86% for traditional (NYPD/EMS) 911 response.

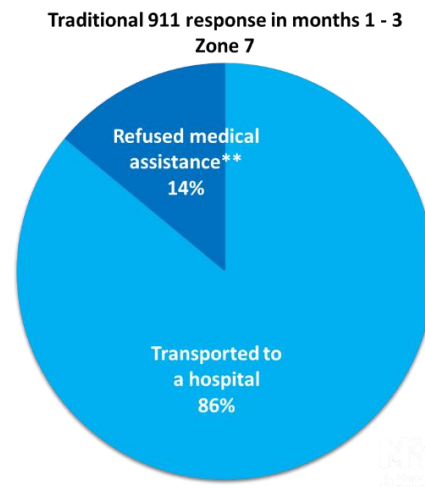
Compared to traditional 911 response, more people are avoiding unnecessary trips to the hospital

- Only 48% of people assisted by B-HEARD were transported to a hospital for additional care – a much lower percentage than traditional response, in which 86% of people were transported to a hospital.

- 43% of people served by B-HEARD were either assisted onsite or transported to a community-based care location. With the traditional response, these people would have had to go to a hospital to get care.



*Includes physical and behavioral medical assistance



**Includes physical medical assistance



- 25% of people assisted by B-HEARD were served onsite, including de-escalation, counseling, or referral to community-based care.
- 18% of people assisted by B-HEARD were transported to a community-based care location – a new option for B-HEARD clients.
- Everyone served by B-HEARD was offered follow-up care. This can include help from a Department of Health and Mental Hygiene team, a Department of Homeless Services team, or a hospital-based program.

Interagency coordination is working well

- B-HEARD has requested onsite assistance from NYPD 18 times, in almost all cases to assist in transport to hospitals.
- NYPD has requested onsite assistance from B-HEARD 44 times.

Assistance is reaching people quickly

- In the first three months of operations, B-HEARD assistance reached people in need on average in 12 minutes. Those with an acute need – either physical or behavioral – were then transported to a hospital.

Average B-HEARD response time
in months 1-3 Zone 7

B-HEARD
response*
12 minutes
14 seconds

*Includes physical and behavioral
medical assistance

To learn more about the B-HEARD program, visit mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/b-heard