



B-HEARD: 911 MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY HEALTH-CENTERED RESPONSE PILOT PROJECT

A New Approach to Mental Health Emergencies

Starting in spring 2021, teams of mental health professionals and Emergency Medical Services Technicians (EMTs)/Paramedics began responding to low acuity mental health 911 calls in East Harlem and Central Harlem, before expanding to the rest of Northern Manhattan, the South Bronx, Central and South Brooklyn, and Western Queens. The teams are currently dispatched by 911 operators in appropriate situations that occur within 25 police precincts in Manhattan (25th, 26th, 28th, 30th, 32nd, 33rd, 34th), the Bronx (40th, 41st, 42nd, 44th, 46th, 48th), Brooklyn (Precincts 63rd, 69th, 67th, 71st, 73rd, 75th) and Queens (104th, 112th, 108th, 114th, 110th, 115th) and operate seven days a week, 16 hours a day. In other precincts and in emergency situations involving a weapon or imminent risk of harm to themselves and/or others, NYPD officers and other emergency response resources will continue to respond as before.

The new health-centered approach – called B-HEARD (the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division) – is part of New York City’s commitment to treat mental health crises as public health problems, not public safety issues. B-HEARD teams are jointly operated by the New York City Fire Department’s Emergency Medical Services and NYC Health + Hospitals, with oversight from the Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health.

How B-HEARD Teams Can Help

B-HEARD Teams use their physical and mental health expertise, and experience in crisis response, to de-escalate emergency situations and respond to a range of behavioral health problems, such as:

- Suicidal ideation
- Substance misuse
- Mental illness, including serious mental illness, and
- Physical health problems, which can be exacerbated by, or mask, mental health problems

B-HEARD Teams conduct physical and mental health assessments and provide on-site assistance, including but not limited to connecting the person to their existing medical and/or mental health provider, crisis counseling, or, with their consent, connecting them to follow-up services. If the person requires emergency medical services, the Teams provide emergency medical care and call EMS for an ambulance transport.

A B-HEARD Team arrives in a non-transport vehicle and has the same Basic Life Support equipment as an ambulance. Teams can be identified by their FDNY EMS uniforms and H+H identification and arrive in an FDNY/EMS marked vehicle.

How to Access B-HEARD Teams

New Yorkers experiencing or witnessing an emergency should continue to call 911 for themselves, a loved one, a neighbor, or others. Callers cannot specifically request a B-HEARD Team. Based on a description of the circumstances and need, 911 operators and EMS are trained to triage and assign calls to B-HEARD Teams based on the call location, dispatch criteria and availability of B-HEARD Teams.

If you or someone you know is in imminent danger or needs immediate medical attention, call 911.

If you or someone who know is experiencing a behavioral health crisis that does not need an immediate in-person response, call NYC Well at 1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355), text “WELL” to 65173 or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell. If you are unsure if 911 or NYC Well is most appropriate, contact NYC Well and a trained counselor will help you assess the appropriate next steps, including connection to 911 or the City’s full array of urgent mental health services.