



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## DATA TRANSPARENCY

If we want to make sure people who call 911 get the kind of care they need, we must examine how 911 is currently being used. To do this, all communities should share their 911 call data with a centralized source. Of course, we must protect the privacy rights of callers as we collect data. We must also have uniform data collection standards to avoid “apples to oranges” comparisons. With this information, we can identify more strengths and weaknesses in the system.

## CREATE A STANDALONE 911 DISPATCH ENTITY

Most 911 dispatch is managed by local law enforcement, and cascades down to Fire and EMS as secondary responses. Too often, these calls get viewed through a law enforcement lens. Similarly, dispatch services run by Fire or EMS have a bias toward their own disciplines. An independent dispatch entity with cooperation from police, fire, EMS, and mental health services would lead to a more equitable and efficient response.

## GIVE MEDICAL PERSONNEL AUTHORITY ON SCENE WHEN CALLED

In our current system, law enforcement has superseding authority at the scene of an emergency even when they are not best equipped to address a given situation. When law enforcement has secured the scene and called for medical assistance, the medical situation has become the priority. The medical professionals should be in charge.

## SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE PROGRAMS CONNECTED TO 988 SERVICES

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) offers 24/7 call, text and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal thoughts, substance use, and mental health crises. As 988 rolls out across California, more funding will help 988 Dispatchers connect to local resources for alternative response, mental health crisis response, staffing and training support, and much more.

## ENSURING ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE IS CONSIDERED WHENEVER AVAILABLE

As more police departments acknowledge the value of alternative response programs, dispatchers should have better understanding of their availability and impact. Communities should ensure dispatchers know about all the alternative response programs available in their area and are trained to identify the right program for a given situation. Additionally, dispatchers should consider a law enforcement response as a last resort, not a first option for mental health and wellness calls.